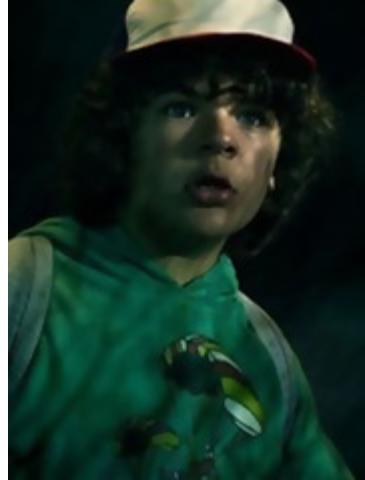




Stranger Things 3 by TheGeorgieB

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Summary: In Stranger Things 3, the story continues as Eleven struggles to adapt to life as a Middle School student, another escaped test subject from Hawkins Lab is hunted, and a terrifying new horror from the Upside Down is unleashed.

1. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 1)

Thanks to everyone who read the *Stranger Things 3 Preview* that I first posted. That was just to give people a taste of what this story is going to be like, which is why it jumps ahead a bit. If you're reading this than hopefully it's because you're wanting to continue the story, so let's go back to the beginning...

Six Years Ago...

3rd December, 1979

In his cell, time moved slowly.

The boy threw the yellow tennis ball against the wall. It bounced, hitting the polished tiled floor, and landing in his small, nimble hands.

There was no clock in his cell, the rhythmic bouncing of the tennis ball being the closest thing he had to a ticking clock.

Even so, when he heard the grinding of metal as the valve on his cell door was twisted open, and the Doctor stepped inside, the boy knew he was right on cue.

"Good morning, young man," the Doctor greeted him warmly, a clipboard under his arm, eyes bulging with excitement behind the lenses of his glasses - one of which was blue, the other red. "You're looking better today."

The boy threw the ball against the wall, a little more power behind this throw. It bounced again, before speeding back towards him. "What does he want *this* time?" he asked, his gaze not shifting from the bouncing yellow tennis ball.

He could feel the weight of the Doctor's gaze upon him. "This isn't about what *he* wants," he began, "this is about what your *country* needs."

The boy threw the ball again, more ferociously than ever before, his

gaze immediately shifting to the Doctor. "And what does my *country need*?" he asked.

The boy stared deep into the Doctor's eyes. Behind the red and blue lenses, he saw an emotion that was typical of the Doctor.

Fear.

The Doctor watched as the ball continued to bounce; hitting the wall, then floor, then bouncing into the air again where a relentless force fired it against the wall again. This sequence looped, the Doctor's eyes following the ball in every direction until he grew irritated with the boy.

"Stop!" he barked all of a sudden.

The surprise and volume of the Doctor's voice broke the boy's concentration, and the ball dropped to the floor.

"Your country needs *you*, son," the Doctor explained to the boy.

The boy shook his head before hopping off of his bed. He shuffled past the Doctor and began walking down the hallway, wiping his nose along the way.

The boy sat alone in the square-shaped room, his feet dangling a few inches above the floor from the metal folding chair he was struggling to sit comfortably in.

A stainless steel table sat between him and another metal folding chair, which was empty.

Looking over his shoulder, the boy was greeted by nothing more than his own reflection, and the reflection of the room. Twice as big. Twice as empty.

Before long, the boy heard the familiar sound of grinding metal as the door in front of him swung open.

Two orderlies entered the room. The first, the boy recognized. He was an obese man with a chiseled jawline. He still wore a swollen

bruise around his left eye where, less than a week ago, the boy had hurled a building block at him during one of his tests. The boy had been confined to his room ever since.

The first orderly held the door open whilst the second orderly, a muscular man with a buzzed haircut, entered the room, clutching the arm of a third man.

The third man the boy did not recognize. He was tall and skinny with a tired face riddled with pock marks and unkempt beard. He wore a grey jumpsuit, his dark hair swept to its side.

After seating the third man across the table from him, the two orderlies left.

The boy watched them leave, gulping as he heard the grinding of metal as they sealed the door behind them.

The third man leaned forward, lifting his hands, which were handcuffed, to the table, before crossing his fingers. His lips curved into a smile, and the man seemed as though he was resisting the temptation to laugh as he stared at the boy in the hospital gown opposite him. "Ty che, blyad?" he said before bursting into raucous laughter. "I always thought a child would make a better agent than any of those clowns in the CIA," he mocked, his accent thick but familiar.

"I'm not an agent," the boy replied, the Russian's laughter fading.

He leaned closer, his brow furrowed. "Then what are you?" he asked. "What's your name?"

The boy turned away from the Russian, thinking. "I don't have a name," he answered carefully.

"Everyone has a name," the Russian replied.

The boy returned the man's gaze. He leaned closer, staring deep into his large, brown eyes. "So, what's yours?"

The Russian laughed again. "Der'mo!" he cursed. "You are just another clown."

The boy stared deeper, until he was engulfed by those large, brown eyes.

At first, he saw nothing.

And then, he saw everything.

The stars glistened. Beyond them, a galaxy swirled, and the boy felt himself hurtling into it.

Suddenly, the boy saw a farm, buried beneath a coat of thick snow. Smoke billowed from the chimney of a small cottage, where two boys threw snowballs at each other. The eldest of the two boys was tall and skinny, with hair swept to its side.

The image faded as quickly as it appeared, the eldest boy had become a young man in a soldier's uniform. He wore a tunic and breeches, and a side cap atop his head, as he charged through a trench, clutching a rifle in his hands. Above him, artillery roared, and an explosion shook the trench. Young men yelled, and were buried by dust and dirt.

This image shifted, and now the young man had grown into a war hero. In a small, slickly designed room, the war hero shook hands with a large, bald man who wore a suit and tie. He removed a medal from its box, and pinned it to the war hero's jacket.

The image faded away, replaced by a pulsing light. It engulfed the boy, and soon enough he was back in the interrogation room, where the Russian was still laughing.

"Anton Bierko," said the boy, wiping a trail of blood from his nose.

The Russian's laughter ceased. Eyes narrowed, he glared at the boy. "What?"

"Everyone has a name," the boy repeated. "And that's yours." He smiled, recounting the events he'd just witnessed in his Mind's Eye. "Anton Bierko, son of Dmitri and Natalia Bierko. You had a brother, Ivan, who was three years younger than you. You used to have snowball fights on your farm," he recalled. The Russian gazing intently, listening to every word. "You enrolled when you were just

sixteen years old, and your actions in the Soviet trenches along the Volkhov river earned you a medal of honor, as well as a position in the KGB."

The Russian was aghast. His jaw hung open. "How?" he asked.

The boy smiled. "What's clown without his tricks?"

The orderlies soon returned to drag the Russian out of the interrogation room. As they did so, Anton failed to take his eyes off the boy, of whose abilities he was still in awe.

After the orderlies left, with Anton in tow, a suited man stepped inside, his heels clicking against the floor. Approaching the boy, he knelt down to his height, revealing his wrinkled face and white hair.

"Good work," he said in a soft, gentle voice, before patting the boy on the back. He turned his back on the boy and went to leave the room.

With hesitation, the boy called after him. "Dr. Brenner?" he cried.

Dr. Brenner turned on his heel to face the boy. "Yes?" he asked.

"*Do I* have a name?" the boy asked curiously.

The Dr. paused and looked at his feet. He approached the boy, and reached out towards his arm.

The boy let the Dr. gently twist his arm, revealing the tattoo below his wrist.

"*That* is the only name you will ever need," Dr. Brenner answered, before turning his back on the boy and exiting the room.

The boy held his arm in front of his face, gazing at the numbers below his wrist.

005.

It was the only name he'd ever known. The only name he'd ever had.

The only name he'd ever need.

CHAPTER 1:

STAY OUT OF ROOM 7!

2nd December, 1985

When they stepped out of the movie theatre, it had begun to snow.

Jane appeared to be the only one who had taken any notice in the change of climate, however, as the others continued to argue amongst themselves about the movie they'd just watched.

"All I'm saying," Lucas began, "is that if Marty McFly *ever* existed, he can't just be *erased* from time and space. He could have sat back and done nothing, and his parents will have *had* to have met each other eventually. How else could he *possibly* still have existed?"

"You're missing the whole point!" Dustin argued. "Marty's presence in 1955 was a self-fulfilling prophecy. He was the *reason* his parents ever met, therefore he *always* had to go to the past; his whole *future* relied on it!"

Lucas sniggered. "But that doesn't make any sense! If his parents never fell in love at the school dance, Marty wouldn't have just been wiped from the face of the Earth!"

"Did you not see his photograph disappear?" Dustin asked in disbelief.

"You're *both* wrong," Mike interjected. "When Marty went back in time, his actions in 1955 didn't change the future, they created a *new* future altogether."

"What do you mean?" asked Will, having grown tired of Lucas and Dustin's bickering.

"I mean that you're looking at the movie's timeline like it's one straight line when, really, it's more like a whole bunch of lines pointing in all kinds of directions," Mike explained.

Lucas was taken aback, Dustin reduced to silence, and Will scratched his head.

"You guys are such losers," Max remarked, walking with her skateboard under her arm. "Can't you just enjoy the film?"

This was the first time Jane had been to see *Back to the Future*, whereas the rest of the party had already watched it *twice* at The Hawk back in July, when it was first released, with tonight's re-release being their *third* time seeing it.

"What did you think, El?" Mike asked her, rushing to the front of the cluster where Jane had been marching head. "Did you enjoy it?"

Jane turned to face Mike. "Yes," she answered, smiling. She took his hand, holding it tightly as they wandered down the street, and towards the bike racks.

Turning back, Jane was greeted by a tall shape towering over her. It stopped her in her tracks.

"Sorry, young lady," the homeless man apologized, his voice raspy and stinking of beer. "Didn't mean to scare ya."

The homeless man was old, his grey hair hidden beneath a black beanie. He wore a torn and dirtied trench coat, and a pair of camo pants. He carried a cardboard sign. A sentence scrawled across it in black marker pen read: THE END IS NIGH.

That gang had remained silent. Eventually, Max said, "Just get out of our way, creep."

The homeless man raised his hands and stepped to the side, letting the gang pass.

"Hope you kids enjoyed the movie!" he yelled as they wandered down the street.

"Who the hell was that?" asked Max.

"His name's Bogart," Will answered. "At least, that's what the Chief calls him. He's been sleeping rough in Hawkins for a while now."

There was a pause. "How the hell did he know we'd been to the movie theatre?"

The gang remained silent.

Jane paused, the gang passing her. She looked over her shoulder.

Bogart was watching her.

"El," Mike uttered, grabbing her hand. "Come on."

Jane and Mike walked away, and Bogart disappeared into the blizzard.

"I have a bad feeling about this," Dustin began, tapping his fingers nervously.

"Maybe we should just turn back?" Lucas suggested.

"But we're so close!" Will exclaimed.

Mike, eyes wide, brows furrowed, gazed at them from across the table. "Choose your next move carefully," he warned them. "It could be your last."

"We're out of health potions," Lucas advised. "We have to go back!"

"We can do this!" Will assured them.

Dustin leaned forward, challenging Mike's gaze. "This party's come too far to turn back now," he decided. "Do your worst," he challenged with a grin.

Mike's stare intensified. "You asked for it," he said before lifting a figurine and placing it firmly on the board. "A Wood Elf challenges you to combat!"

The rest of the party were silent. Then, in unison, they burst into raucous laughter.

"A Wood Elf?" Dustin asked between fits of uncontrolled giggling. "That's it? After seven hours, *that's* what we need to beat to win?"

"Will, why don't you fireball him and get this over with?" Lucas

suggested before softly chuckling.

Will, grinning excitably, picked up the dice, shook them in his hands, and rolled a fifteen, which was met with a cheer from Dustin and Lucas.

Will and Dustin shared a high-five, whilst Lucas gave Will a pat on the back. It wasn't until their giggling faded that they noticed Mike's silence.

"Miss," Mike uttered from across the table.

"What?" Lucas yelled.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Dustin complained. "That Wood Elf should be burnt to a crisp by now."

Mike picked up the figurine, removing it from the board, "But this is no Wood Elf," he began, before slamming another, much taller figurine on the table. "It's the *Shapeshifter* in another disguise!"

"Shit!" Dustin cursed, sharing a worried look with Lucas.

"What do we do now?" Will asked, panicked.

"The Shapeshifter approaches," Mike begins ominously. "He's hungry... And he'll feed only on the flesh of his foes!"

"Use a health potion!" Dustin advised.

"We don't have any!" Will reminded him.

"I *knew* we should have turned back!"

"The Shapeshifter has grown tired of your incessant bickering!" Mike yelled. "He slaughters your party one by one." Showing no mercy, Mike swept the other figurines from the board, leaving only the Shapeshifter standing victoriously.

"Goddammit," Dustin cursed. "What did we say, guys?" he asked the others. "We stick together, no matter what!"

Jane watched as the rest of the party apologized to each other, whilst Mike, noticing her sitting halfway up the stairs, approached her.

"El," he began, taking a seat next to her on the stairs. "You okay?"

She nodded. "Did the Shapeshifter get them?" she asked.

"Yeah," Mike answered. "It got them."

There was a pause. Jane looked down at her feet.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Mike asked her.

She turned to Mike. "Did I ever tell you about Kali?" she asked him.

Mike shook his head.

"She was like me," Jane explained. "She had... abilities." Jane turned away. Her heart sank whenever she thought about Kali, and the friends she'd left behind.

"Where is she now?" Mike asked.

"Looking for the bad men," Jane answered, turning back to Mike.

"El," Mike began, putting a hand on her knee, "the bad men are all gone," he reassured her.

Jane shook her head. "Not all."

Sat alone in her room, Jane took another deep breath before wrapping the blindfold around her head.

Darkness.

It was seemingly never ending. In every direction, there was only darkness to greet her, the sound of her feet hitting the shallow water echoing into infinity.

Over her shoulder, Jane noticed a tall figure, with its back to her.

A tall man stood, his hands behind his back, staring blankly ahead.

He wore an open longcoat that fell to his knees, and his white hair shone.

"Papa," Jane uttered, approaching the man.

Dr. Brenner turned to face Jane, returning her gaze, which startled her.

He smiled cruelly before raising his hand, which began to drip with thick slime, his fingers stretching out and transforming into thick, pink tentacles.

Jane fell back into the water with a splash, and the creature stepped towards her.

Its head slid back, its mouth gaping open. Tentacles climbed from out of its mouth, wiggling uncontrollably, and dripping with slime.

Jane tried to crawl away, but slipped clumsily in the shallow water, when she felt the tentacles wrap themselves around her leg. She tugged at them, but they were too tight.

Looking up at the creature, she saw razor sharp teeth aligning mouths that were spread open like a flower petal.

The creature screeched.

Suddenly, there was light.

Jane was back in her bedroom, a familiar face in front of her.

"Jane, can you hear me?" she heard Hopper yelling, his hands on her shoulders.

Jane, catching her breath, met Hopper's eyes.

She began to cry, and fell into Hopper's arms.

"It's okay," he reassured her. "It was just a bad dream."

But Jane knew that what she'd seed had been more than just a bad dream.

What she'd seen was real.

What's she'd seen was the Shapeshifter.

'Chapter 1: Stay Out of Room 7!' continues shortly. Please leave a REVIEW in the meantime!

2. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 2)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

Hopper was reading today's edition of the *Indiana Echo* when he heard a voice say, "Make way for breakfast."

Putting the newspaper aside, a plate of Waffles, drenched in maple syrup, was placed in front of him.

"Waffles?" he uttered. Hopper sighed, and looked across the table from him. "Whose idea was this?"

Jane, sat across the table from him, shook her head.

Hopper turned to Will, who sat across from Jane. "I like waffles," he said softly.

"I voted for waffles too," Joyce added, placing plates in front of Jane and Will, before returning to the sink, where she sunk a frying pan in a washing up bowl. Noticing the clock, she panicked. "Jeez, is that the time? I need to go to work."

Jonathan walked across the lounge and towards the front door, a camera around his neck, and a determined look across his face.

"Jonathan!" Joyce yelled. "Can you drop Will and Jane off at school today?"

"I can't, Mom, I've gotta go and meet Nancy," he explained. "We've got a story today. A *big* one."

Finishing off his waffles, and taking a final slurp of coffee, Hopper rose from his chair. "I'll take them," he offered as he swung on his coat.

"Are you sure?" Joyce asked, approaching him. "Aren't you already late?"

"Only a little," he assured her.

Joyce rubbed her hands uncertainly, looking at the clock again. "You know what, I could probably-"

"Joyce," Hopper interrupted, "it's fine". He put a hand on her shoulder. "It's gonna take more than ten minutes for the world to end."

"Okay, have a good day you two," said Hopper as he pulled up outside Hawkins Middle School.

Will hopped out of the jeep. Behind him, Jane shuffled towards the door.

"Jane," Hopper began, watching her through the rear view mirror, "be careful, okay?"

Jane nodded, then stepped out of the jeep, following Will towards the school's entrance.

Hopper watched them both for a while, before driving off, his mind remaining fixed on Jane all the way to the police station.

"Hey, mornin' Chief," Powell greeted him as he entered the station, a cigarette hanging out of his mouth.

Hopper stood there in silence for a few seconds, before taking the cigarette out of his mouth himself. "Where's Flo?" he asked.

"Sick," Powell answered from across the room. "Meet Beverley," he said, gesturing towards the redhead in her 30s, sitting at Flo's desk.

After hanging up his own coat, Hopper approached the temp. "Beverley," he began, leaning over her desk, "you mind sticking a fresh pot of coffee on?"

The temp looked up at him, a blank expression on her face, before her mouth twisted into a smile. "Sure thing, Chief," she said apathetically.

"Where's Callahan?" Hopper asked, approaching Powell, who was sat in his chair, reading the newspaper, his feet on his desk.

"Loch Nora," Powell answered vaguely. "The Schumacher residence," he continued. "Somebody broke into the Mayor's home last night."

"Mayor Schumacher got robbed?"

"Just a necklace... or something like that," he mumbled. "I sent Callahan cause I figured you were overdue a late morning," he quipped. "Although I'd get over there anyway, if I were you. Mayor Schumacher, he asked for you specifically, said he wanted the best man on the case."

"So, you sent Callahan?" Hopper asked as Beverley handed him a hot cup of coffee.

Powell chuckled.

"So, what do you think?" Powell asked.

Hopper took a slurp of coffee.

"Needs more sugar."

Loch Nora had the lowest crime rate in all of Hawkins.

The last time Hopper had even set foot in the cul-de-sac, he recalled as he climbed the porch towards Mayor Schumacher's front door, was to convince Mrs. Drayton that the aliens hiding in her tree were actually a dray of squirrels.

Approaching the front door, Hopper noticed a broken window to his right, with fragments of glass littered below it.

He stepped inside Mayor Schumacher's home, where he could already here the dry tones of Officer Callahan.

"And you didn't hear anything?" Callahan asked from the study. Hopper approached the voice, passing the living room on his way, which was on the *other* side of the broken window, and where

Hopper noticed a shiny TV, a slick vinyl player, and a hefty record collection all remained.

"I'm a heavy sleeper," Mayor Schumacher replied in a nasal, wobbly voice. "I didn't even *realize* I'd been robbed until I came downstairs and saw the broken window."

Entering the study, Hopper found Callahan questioning Mayor Schumacher, a short, stubby man with curly hair and thick rimmed glasses. He was barefoot, and wore a flannel outfit. The Mayor of Hawkins was still in his pajamas.

"Is that when you discovered that your wife's necklace had been stolen?" asked Callahan, jotting onto a notebook all the while.

"*Pendant*, yes," Mayor Schumacher insisted. "She keeps it in a box in the downstairs bathroom."

Approaching them both, Hopper said, "Exactly how much do you reckon that pendant's worth?"

"Chief Hopper," Mayor Schumacher uttered, his jaw hanging open, only just noticing the Chief.

"Must be worth *a lot* considering the robber walked straight past a brand new television along the way, not to mention a *whole* record collection."

"Chief, I- I-" the Mayor stuttered.

"Why don't you leave me and the Mayor to talk, Callahan?" Hopper insisted.

Looking up from his notebook, Callahan was confused. "But, I already-"

Callahan's voice trailed off after he noticed Hopper's glare. "You got it, Chief," he said before packing his notebook away, and leaving the study.

Hopper leaned in close to the Mayor. "The glass is on the wrong side," he told him, before walking past him.

"What?" the Mayor uttered, confused.

"*The glass*," Hopper repeated, pacing slowly up and down the study. "If the robber broke your window from the outside, the glass should have fallen into your lounge, not onto your porch." Hopper paused, looking at a large photograph of Mayor Schumacher that had been hung up above the fireplace. "That is," he began "if the robber broke in from the *outside*."

Mayor Schumacher paused, taken aback by Hopper's thinly veiled accusation. "What exactly are you implying?" he asked.

Chief Hopper span around and swiftly approached the Mayor, growing impatient with his lies. "Listen, Larry, I know you did this just to get my attention, and you've got it - so why don't you cut to the chase already?"

The innocence left Mayor Schumacher's eyes. "Very well," he said, before passing Hopper and walking to the front of his desk. "I'm sorry for leading you on," he said, opening a drawer in his dark oak desk. "I couldn't risk raising any suspicion."

Hopper watched as the Mayor removed a single sheet of paper from the drawer, closed it, and approached him, handing him the letter.

It read, in letters made up of newspaper clippings: I KNOW ABOUT YOUR AFFAIR. I WANT \$25,000 IN UNMARKED BILLS OR I WILL GO TO EVERY NEWSPAPER IN INDIANA.

Hopper read the blackmail letter a couple of times, then asked, "Who is she?"

"Just some dancer from Indianapolis," Mayor Schumacher answered. "Does it really matter?"

"No, but it explains where the necklace went," Hopper replied, grinning.

"*Pendant*," Mayor Schumacher corrected. "Listen, Jim, I reached out to you because I've known you longer than anyone else on the force, but if you can't help me, then I'll stop wasting my time."

Hopper could see the desperation in Mayor Schumacher's eyes, but seeing the grown man begging in his pajamas made his stomach turn. "Larry," he began, "as little as *I want* to help you, extortion is still a crime," he explained begrudgingly. "I'll help you find whoever's doing this."

Mayor Schumacher was relieved. "Thank you, Jim," he said. "So, where do we start."

"Easy," said Hopper, reading the blackmail letter a third time. "We start by giving them what they want." He traced the words with his finger. "\$25,000, right?"

Mayor Schumacher scoffed. "Are you crazy?" he asked Hopper. "I don't have that kind of money."

"Sure you don't," Hopper replied, grinning, as he screwed up the letter. "But *they* don't know that."

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE** and look out for the continuation of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

3. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 3)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

Steve Harrington had his head under the hood of a Chevrolet Corvette, inspecting an overheated cylinder head.

"Whaddya think, Steve?" a voice asked, appearing at his side.

Steve turned to him, seeing an enthusiastic smile on his father's tired face. His baseball cap hid his greying hair, and his overalls were covered in oil. "There's a drop in coolant and oil levels," Steve began, "and there was smoke coming out of the exhaust when the owner first brought it in." Steve paused, rubbed oil from his forehead, and pulled his head from under the hood. "I figure the cylinder head's failed," he told his father.

His father smiled happily. "You're learning quickly," he told him, before patting his son on the back. "You know, I've been thinking," he began, walking away from the car, "I've been running this shop for almost thirty years now." He turned to face Steve. "And I'm tired, son."

Steve threw an oily rag over his shoulder, and crossed his arms. "You should take some time off," Steve suggested. "Me and Ritchie, I know we jerk around a lot, but we always get the job done."

"And done *well*," Steve's father added. "That's why I've been thinking about letting you two run 'Dougie's Auto-Repair' from here on out."

Steve was speechless. "I.." he began. "I don't know what to say."

"You don't have to say anything," Steve's father assured him. "Just promise me you'll think about it," he added, patting his son gently on the shoulder as he passed him.

"Sure thing, Dad," Steve promised as his father walked away.

He returned to the overheated cylinder head in the Chevrolet Corvette. "Hey, Ritchie," he heard his father say as he left the garage.

"Steve," Ritchie said, "I need you to install some new fog lights on an Audi 5000S."

"I'm a little busy here," Steve replied.

"C'mon, I'll finish up here," Ritchie insisted. "Get those fog lights fixed and take a break."

Steve pulled his head from under the hood, and handed Ritchie the oily rag. "Thanks, Ritchie," he said, leaving the garage.

Outside, Steve was greeted by a man in his 50s, wearing a white coat and striped tie, and a pair of glasses with different colored lenses - one blue, the other red. His hair was brown and curly.

"That's an '82, right?" Steve asked, gesturing towards the sedan the man was leaning against.

"'83," he corrected.

Steve whistled, ogling the car from hood to rear. "I like the colour... I hear she needs a new set of fog lights," he said, approaching the hood of the car, and opening her up.

"That's right," the man said. "I thought I'd better not leave it any longer. *Apparently*, we've got a bad mist on the way." There was a pause. Steve leaned under the hood. "So," the man began, approaching Steve's side, "are you Dougie?"

Steve chuckled. He disconnected a clip. "No. Douglass is my father," he answered. "I'm Steve. Steve Harrington."

"Nice to meet you, Steve," the man replied sincerely. "I'm Dr. Richard Tamblyn," he said, holding out his hand.

Steve noticed this and said, "Oh, my hands are dirty."

The Doctor stared at him, his hand still outstretched. "So are mine," he replied, smiling devilishly.

Steve shook his hand, and returned to the car, removing a washer, a bolt and a nut, followed by the light's entire housing, which he lifted away from the vehicle.

"So," Steve began, breaking an awkward silence, "what brings you to Hawkins, Doc?"

"Work," the Doctor answered vaguely. "I work at the Psychiatric Ward just outside of town. I got transferred from Indianapolis about a year ago."

"Indianapolis, huh?" said Steve, looking up at the Doctor. "My Mom used to take me to the Zoo in Indianapolis. For my birthday, *every* year, she'd take me to see the leopards, the zebras, the rhinos..."

"Don't forget the chameleons," Dr. Tamblyn interrupted. "Incredible animals... Able to adjust their colours for camouflage and hide from whatever predator by which they're being threatened," he explained, eyes bulging with astonishment. "Bet you don't see anything like that in Hawkins, huh?"

Steve chuckled nervously. "You, uh, got a place in Hawkins, Doc?" he asked whilst inserting the new fog light.

"Not yet," he answered. "I'm staying at The Hive until I find somewhere." He watched Steve insert the bolts back into the fresh housing, and tighten them with a wrench. "So, does your Mom still take you to the Zoo for your birthday?" he asked, smiling warmly.

"No," Steve answered coldly. "She died when I was thirteen."

The Doctor bowed his head mournfully. "I'm sorry to hear that," he replied sincerely.

Steve leaned back from the car, lowering his wrench. He began to smile. "You know, my Mom always wanted me to become a Doctor," he said before chuckling and raising the wrench again. "I can't imagine she'd be too happy to hear that I was working at my Dad's auto-shop," he added sarcastically, tightening the bolts.

"My Mother used to say that there was nothing more rewarding than an honest day's labor," the Doctor replied, smiling.

Steve rose to his feet and closed the car hood, before wiping oil from his sweaty forehead. "I guess Mom's are right *most* of the time," he said.

The Doctor chuckled, reaching into his wallet. "Thank you, Steve Harrington," he said warmly, "and give my regards to your father."

Dr. Tamblyn handed Steve a fifty-dollar bill. "Keep the change," he insisted.

"Wow," said Steve, tucking it into his pocket. "Thanks, Doc."

Dr. Tamblyn walked towards his car, then turned back to Steve. "It's Shamrock," he said.

"What?" Steve asked, confused.

"The colour," the Doctor replied, gesturing towards the sedan. "Shamrock. It's a shade of green."

Steve nodded. "It's nice," he said.

"You know," the Doctor began, re-approaching Steve, "the human eye can see more shades of green than any other color." His stare intensified. "You know why?" he asked.

Steve shrugged. "To spot predators?" he asked.

The Doctor grinned, then shook his head. "Exactly the opposite, Steve Harrington," he replied, before turning his back on Steve, and climbing into his car.

Stunned, Steve watched the Doctor drive away, the question still echoing in his head.

Then, he figured it out. "To catch prey," he said to himself.

It was at that moment that Steve Harrington remembered that there was no Psychiatric Ward in Hawkins.

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE**

and look out for the continuation of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

4. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 4)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

Recommended Listening: *Loving the Alien* by David Bowie

3rd December, 1985

Loving the Alien by David Bowie was playing on the radio as Jonathan drove through Mirkwood.

"I hate this," Nancy complained from the passenger seat.

"Want me to change the station?" Jonathan asked awkwardly.

"No," she replied, shaking her head. "I mean *this*," she tried to explain. "Gordon doesn't trust me, so he sends me on some wild goose chase across Indiana, instead of letting me pursue a *real* story."

"Listen," Jonathan began, turning down the radio until the vocals of David Bowie faded to a gentle whisper, "you've only been working this job for a couple of months," he reminded her. "You haven't had a chance to prove to your boss just how talented you really are," he explained. "*This* is your chance, Nancy."

Nancy smiled sweetly. "I guess you're right."

"And for the record, this *could* be a real story," Jonathan added.

Nancy scoffed. "Please," she said bitterly. "This guy told the cops that there were *aliens* hiding in his crops, and that they were stealing parts from his tractor to rebuild their flying saucer."

Nancy glanced at Jonathan. "Okay, so maybe it's a *little* excessive," he replied. "But stranger things have happened, right?" he said, grinning at Nancy, who giggled.

"*Believing the strangest things*," the vocals on the radio whispered, "*Loving the alien*."

Jonathan drove past a sign that read: LEAVING HAWKINS. COME AGAIN SOON.

The air reeked of manure.

The sun shone brightly over a field of crops that seemed to go on for miles.

"You ready?" asked Nancy nervously.

Jonathan nodded. "Sure," he replied.

Nancy rang the doorbell.

A strong breeze blew, and Jonathan heard the sound of wooden wind chimes bashing against each other.

With a piercing creak, the front door swung open.

In the doorway stood a short, stocky man with a greying mullet, and a horseshoe moustache. He wore an orange trucker cap and an olive fleece jacket. "Can I help you?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

"Mr. Clarke? My name's Nancy, I'm from the Indiana Echo," said Nancy, before gesturing towards Jonathan. "This is Jonathan, my photographer," she added.

Jonathan waved awkwardly. "Hello," he said.

The crop farmer seemed less than impressed. He turned his back on the two of them, walking back into the house. "Come in if you're comin' in," he mumbled, leaving the front door wide open.

Jonathan and Nancy shared a concerned look, then followed the crop farmer inside.

Following the crop farmer down a hallway, Jonathan noticed a framed photo of a young boy, no more than eight years-old, sat atop a tractor, wearing an orange trucker cap similar to that of the crop farmer's.

They took a seat in the lounge, on a floral sofa still in its plastic packaging, rustling as they got comfortable.

On the mantelpiece, Jonathan noticed a Napoleon clock, the hour hand approaching 10 o'clock.

"So, whaddya wanna know?" the crop farmer asked, sitting in an armchair opposite them.

Nancy looked at Jonathan, who smiled at her encouragingly. "You told the Sheriff's Department that you saw something in your crop field," she said.

"That's right," the crop farmer confirmed, his stare intense and fixed on Nancy.

"Mr. Clarke, can you-

"It's Kenny. Only my little brother gets called Mr. Clarke."

Nancy leaned forward, returning Kenny's stare. "Can you tell me what you saw?"

Kenny smirked. "I wanna hear *you* say it," he answered.

There was a pause. "*Aliens*," Nancy uttered.

Kenny's smile widened. "You don't believe me, do you?" he asked her, before rising to his feet, and leaving the lounge.

Nancy turned to Jonathan, who wore a concerned look.

"What if I told you that this wasn't their *first* visit to my farm?" Kenny asked, returning to the lounge, a framed photograph in his hand. "That, seven years ago, they came to this farm, and they took my son," he said, handing Nancy the photograph.

It was the same photograph of the young boy on the tractor, only now, seeing the child's smile filled Jonathan with sorrow.

"The Sheriff tried to convince me that he got lost in the crop field," Kenny explained, "but I know the truth. I know *they* took him."

"Did you see them?" Nancy asked, eyes wide.

Kenny leaned forward, returning Nancy's gaze. "Not the first time," he answered. "But last night, I *heard* one of them. It was *hiding*," he continued. "And it made this sound... this *gurgling* sound... like water going down a plughole. I must've scared it off, 'cause when I got closer, I heard the crops rustling... and *then* I saw it."

"What did it look like?" Jonathan asked curiously.

Kenny sighed. "Well, it was dark," he explained, "so, I didn't get a proper look. But I *know* what I saw, and I know it ain't nothing like anything else on God's green Earth," he said. "It had long, flapping tentacles, and its skin was coarse and wet, and it... it didn't have a..."

"It didn't have a face?" Jonathan asked expectedly.

Kenny's eyes widened. "How'd you know that?" he asked.

Jonathan and Nancy shared an anxious look.

"So, you believe me?" Kenny asked.

"It doesn't matter what *we* believe," Nancy replied. "It's what everyone else believes, that matters."

Kenny leaned back in his armchair. "Alright," he said, "and how do we convince the rest of the world that we've got an alien invasion on our hands?" he asked, shaking his hands.

"We find your son," Nancy answered.

Kenny smiled warmly, his eyes narrowing, and the wrinkles on his forehead creasing. "You really think you can find my boy?"

"We can try," Jonathan answered sensitively.

"Where's the boy's mother?" Nancy asked, swiftly changing the subject.

"Lilith died when he was only four years-old," he answered. "She got sick."

"So, it was just the two of you after that?" asked Nancy.

"That's right," said Kenny. "Except for the Doc, of course."

"Doc?" asked Jonathan, confused.

"After his Mom died, I started taking my son to a pediatrician called Dr. Tamblyn," Kenny explained. "He took good care of him... helped him through a lot."

"Where is this Doctor now?" asked Nancy.

"I dunno," Kenny replied. "He up and disappeared around the time my boy was taken. I never heard from him again."

Nancy glanced at Jonathan, who nodded assertively. They swiftly rose to their feet.

"Wait a minute," said Kenny, taken aback, "you don't think-?"

"If you see anything else in that crop field," Nancy began, handing Kenny her card, "you call me before you call anyone else. You got it?"

Kenny nodded, looking up at Nancy.

Together, Nancy and Jonathan left the house, returning to their car, the wooden wind chimes still bashing at each other in the cold breeze.

"You think this Doctor has something to do with all this?" Jonathan asked, stepping into the driver's seat.

Sat in the passenger seat, Nancy said, "There's only one way to find out."

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE** and look out for the continuation of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

5. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 5)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

It was lunch time at Hawkins Middle School, and the yard was filled with students.

"What did it look like?" asked Lucas, eyes bulging with curiosity.

"Did *this one* have a face?" Dustin asked, sitting to her left.

"Was it slimy?" asked Will nervously.

"Did it have big teeth?" Max asked, sat beside Lucas, holding her skateboard across her knees.

"Guys, *enough*," said Mike, firmly, silencing the party. "This is *serious*."

They sat on the table in a semi-circle around Jane, all leaning forward to hear her story about the Shapeshifter.

"It had long, slimy tentacles," Jane explained, much to Will's anxiety. "I tried to run away, but then it *got* me."

Lucas was confused. "But you're still here," he gathered.

"Are you sure this wasn't a dream?" asked Max impatiently.

Jane turned to Max. "I'm sure," she assured her.

"How do you know?"

"I just *do*," Jane replied firmly, which silenced Max.

"So what do we do?" Dustin asked, almost hysterical with panic. "If this thing *really can* shapeshift, it could be *anywhere*. And *anyone*."

"Your mailman, your neighbor, your teacher..." said Lucas ominously. "Even your parents."

"Wait a minute," said Dustin. "How do we know that *one of us* isn't the shapeshifter?"

"That's ridiculous," said Mike.

"But it's possible, right?" Dustin asked, turning to Jane for his answer.

Jane nodded.

"I've got an idea," said Max, sitting up from the table, skateboard under her arm. "We each take it in turn to say something *only we* know about another member of the party. If what you say is true, then you can't *possibly* be the shapeshifter."

"I'll go first!" said Lucas excitedly before rising to his feet and pointing at Dustin. "At his old school, in third grade, the fire alarm startled Dustin and he peed himself in front of his *whole* class," he announced, chuckling, and causing Mike, Max and Will to all burst into laughter.

"Hey!" Dustin complained. "I told you *never* to tell anyone about that." The laughter continued, and Dustin curled his fists. "Alright, my turn," he said, rising to his feet. "*Lucas* still sleeps with a night light," he revealed to the rest of the party, who all laughed, except for Lucas, whose face dropped.

Laughing, Max pointed at Mike and said, "The other day, Mike tried to do a cartwheel, and fell off a desk."

Dustin turned to Mike. "So, *that's* how you got that cut on your chin," he said, chuckling.

Mike's face had turned a warm shade of red. Embarrassed, he said, "Oh yeah? Well, Will called Mrs. Drayton 'Mom' for the *whole* of second grade."

Will's laughter ended abruptly. "Mike used to have a crush on Edna, the school cook," he said angrily.

The party erupted into another round of raucous laughter, and even Jane cracked a smile.

"Isn't she, like, *sixty*?" Dustin asked, giggling uncontrollably.

"Alright," said Mike, the laughter continuing. "*Alright*," he repeated more firmly. "I guess that means none of us is the Shapeshifter," he gathered as the laughter dwindled.

"So, how do we find it?" asked Will nervously.

"I dunno, but we've *gotta* find it," Lucas assured them, "before *it* finds us."

The school bell rang. It was time for fifth period.

Approaching his locker, Will noticed Tyler and Robbie stood beside the latter's locker, chuckling.

"Hey, guys" said Will. "What's up?"

Tyler, who had been in Will's Chemistry class since seventh grade, looked at Will, snorted childishly, then turned back to Robbie. "Let's get outta here," he said before Robbie closed his locker, and the two boys walked away, chuckling all the while.

Will sighed, then turned to his locker. Pulling at the handle, he was surprised to find that the door wouldn't give. He pulled harder, the metal jamming with every attempt.

"Here, let me help," a voice said before a small fist swiftly bashed against the locker door.

Will pulled at the handle, and the door gently swung open. "Thanks," he said, turning to the boy stood opposite him.

"Funny how the school can seem to afford new uniforms for the football team, but can't even get these lockers fixed" the boy replied, grinning.

Will smiled. He was certain he'd been in the same History class as he boy for the last year, and *still* he couldn't remember his name. He wore a pink polo shirt, and had dark, brown hair swept to the side.

"You're 'Zombie Boy', right?" the boy asked, eyes wide.

Will tensed, his smile fading. "That's *not* my name," he reminded the boy, before turning his back on him, and walking down the hallway.

"Hey, there are *worse* names to have," the boy assured Will, chasing him down the hallway before grabbing his shoulder. "Trust me," he said, as Will turned to face him.

A broad-shouldered, red-headed boy in a flannel shirt passed them, bashing the boy in the shoulder along the way. "What's up, Choky?" he said to the boy.

There was an awkward pause. "'Choky'?" Will repeated in disbelief.

"You don't wanna know," the boy replied, grinning.

Will laughed, and the boy stepped closer.

"These nicknames... They tend to stick around," he explained to Will.

Will's smile faded. "You mean I'm gonna be 'Zombie Boy' all the way through High School?"

"High School... And *beyond*."

Will sighed. "That *sucks*."

"Are you *kidding*?" said the boy. "You're not the one getting called 'Choky' for the rest of his life."

Will laughed again. "It's not that bad," he said unconvincingly.

"That's easy for you to say. You're 'Zombie Boy'," the boy reminded Will, his eyes wide and excitable. "You sound like a freakin' *superhero*!"

"You really think so?" asked Will, his fondness of the boy growing.

"Sure..." the boy assured him. Second later, his smile faded, and his eyes became sad.

"What's wrong?" asked Will.

"Oh, nothing," the boy replied, looking at the floor. "It's just that... 'Zombie Boy' would never wanna be friends with 'Choky'."

"Sure I would!" Will assured him.

The boy looked up at Will, his eyes widening. "*Really?*"

"But you've gotta tell me your real name," Will replied. "I can't just call you 'Choky'."

The boy grinned. "It's the only name I've ever needed."

"We are *always* evolving," Mr. Clarke began from the front of the class.

With a click of the remote, the slide projector forwarded, displaying a new slide, this one showing a line of human-like figures marching in a parade from left to right. The figure furthest to the right walked upright, and clutched a spear.

"Evolving into *better* versions of ourselves, and the most interesting part is that we're never finished," Mr. Clarke continued. "*All* animals evolve, and they do this to help their species *survive*," he explained, piquing the interest of his class, who stared straight ahead, their gaze fixed on the projection.

"*Survive* from predators, or to *outsmart* their prey. *Camouflage* can be *protective*," Mr. Clarke continued before clicking the remote. The image of a tranquil forest glade was projected. Hidden within the grass and the branches, however, were a number of mammals. "Squirrels, deer, field mice... They're all shades of brown, or gray, which match the colours of the tree bark and the forest floor in their natural habitat," Mr. Clarke explained. "However, camouflage can also be *aggressive*, and used to *conceal* a predator from its prey." He clicked the remote again, and the image of a large, stripy tiger was displayed. The tiger bared its teeth as it hid in the grass. "*Tigers* can use their big, black stripes to hide in tall grass, allowing them to get close enough to their unsuspecting prey, before they *strike*," said Mr. Clarke, pouncing forward at the end of his sentence, mimicking a tiger attacking its prey. "However," he continued, "some animals

don't just take on the *colour* or the *pattern* of their surroundings... *Some* animals can camouflage themselves using their *shape*." Clicking the remote, the next image Mr. Clarke's projection displayed was of a small fish shaped like a weed, gliding through the water. "Covered in small fins all over its body, the Leafy Sea Dragon blends perfectly amongst the seaweed where it lives, and can even manipulate its body to *move* like a piece of seaweed, gracefully tumbling around in the water."

Jane had not stopped thinking about the Shapeshifter since her discussion with the party at lunchtime. Looking around her, she knew that the creature could be in that very room, *disguising* itself as one of her classmates, or even Mr. Clarke himself.

Her anxiety worsening, Jane leaned over to the desk next to her. "Mike," she whispered softly, but Mike was too engrossed by Mr. Clarke's lesson to hear her. "*Mike*," she repeated, a little louder this time.

"What is it?" asked Mike, refusing to look away from Mr. Clarke's presentation.

"The Shapeshifter..." Jane replied ominously.

Finally, Mike turned to face her. "Not now," he said firmly, before redirecting his attention back to the projection.

"But, Mike..."

"We'll talk *after*, okay?" said Mike. "You're disrupting the lesson."

Jane couldn't believe what she was hearing. Surely the fate of every man, woman and child in Hawkins was more important than one of Mr. Clarke's curiosity voyages. "Mike..." she said, her voice louder than a whisper. "I think I know how to stop it."

"Jane!" Mr. Clarke yelled from the front of the class, his eyes fixed on Jane. "Something you'd care to share?"

Jane paused. She could feel the weight of her classmates staring at her. "No, Mr. Clarke," she answered quickly.

"Alrighty then," said Mr. Clarke chirpily, "you can tell me *after* school, in detention."

Mike glared at Jane. He rolled his eyes, then returned his gaze to the front of the class, where Mr. Clarke continued with his presentation.

Jane was confused. She felt an overwhelming feeling of guilt, but she couldn't understand why.

Perhaps it would have helped if she actually knew what 'detention' was.

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE** and look out for the continuation of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

6. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 6)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

"This here's the front desk," said O'Halloran, leading Lucas into the reception.

Above them, a fluorescent light flickered. "I've been meaning fix that," O'Halloran assured him. The manager was in his 70s, his grey hair swept back and hidden under a baseball cap. He wore a grey long-sleeved shirt, tucked into his jeans. "Now," he began, gesturing towards the front desk, upon which sat a red telephone, and a black ledger, "there may be times when I'll need your help on the front desk," he explained, "but *mainly* you'll be looking after the rooms. Changing bed sheets, scrubbing toilets, and so on."

"Sounds great," Lucas said drily.

O'Halloran chuckled. "I remember *my* first job," he said, smiling. "Stacking shelves," he continued. "I hated it," he told Lucas, chuckling, "and I hated my parents for making do it. *But*, it did teach me something important."

O'Halloran led Lucas out of the reception. "*What?*" Lucas asked curiously, looking up at the manager.

"It taught me to *try*," O'Halloran explained, "or else I'd end up working in Bradley's Big Buy for the rest of my life."

Outside, the motel's neon lights lit up the sky. In big, block letters, the sign read: THE HIVE.

"C'mon," O'Halloran said, leading Lucas across the motel, "I'll show you one of the rooms."

They approached a wooden door. On it, the number 5 hung upside down.

"Dammit," O'Halloran cursed, flipping the number back to its original place, before it fell upside down again. "I've been meaning to fix that *too*," he assured Lucas before swinging the door open, and stepping into the room.

The carpet was colored red, brown and orange, in a hexagonal pattern. In the room there was a double bed, a dusty wardrobe, and bedside cabinet, on top of which was a red telephone. A small bathroom joined the room in the right hand corner.

"All the rooms are the same," O'Halloran explained. "Bed, wardrobe, en-suite..." He approached the wardrobe, wiping a thick layer of dust from its top. "Some of the furniture in here might want dusting," he suggested before approaching the bed, "and these sheets will need changing."

O'Halloran stood back. "Alright," he said, smiling warmly at Lucas, "why don't you get started here, then move on to the next room when you're done?"

"Is there anyone staying in any of the rooms?" asked Lucas, already fluffing a couple of pillows.

"Not tonight. It's changeover day," O'Halloran assured him before stepping out of the room.

O'Halloran paused, before turning back to face Lucas, a look of dread having descended upon him. "That being said," he began, "stay out of Room 7."

"Why?" Lucas asked, confused.

O'Halloran hesitated. "Asbestos," he answered clumsily. "The whole room's off limits, okay?"

"Sure," said Lucas.

O'Halloran smiled, then left the room, returning to the front desk.

Lucas was halfway through turning a duvet cover inside out when he heard a voice call his name.

"Lucas," the gravely voice called, echoing.

"O'Halloran?" said Lucas, stepping outside of the room.

The parking lot was empty. There was no sign of the voice.

"Lucas," it called again, and Lucas began pacing up and down the motel, searching for the voice's origin.

The voice had no distinct source. It almost felt as though it was in his head.

"Lucas," the voice called for the third time.

Looking over his shoulder, Lucas' heart sank as he realized where he was.

Behind him stood the door to Room 7.

"In here," the voice in his head told him.

Approaching the door, Lucas heard the sound of oozing sludge and, looking down, he noticed that he'd stepped in thick, wet goo, seeping from the other side of the door.

Lucas lifted his foot into his hands, and tried to wipe the goo from his brand new sneakers. The goo was cold to the touch, and it dripped slowly from Lucas' fingers.

Lucas heard a crunch and, looking below the door to Room 7, he noticed a thick, green vine growing, stretching through the gap underneath the door.

Lucas stepped back, the vine slowly approaching him.

His sneakers still covered in goo, Lucas slipped, and fell onto his back.

There were more vines now, and they slid towards Lucas.

Suddenly, Lucas heard the clang of metal, followed by a loud wheeze from inside Room 7.

With a swing of his axe, O'Halloran had chopped the vines in half, their stems retreating back into the room.

Lying on his back, Lucas caught his breath.

O'Halloran stood over him, he threw the axe aside before approaching Lucas, and offering him a hand.

"Asbestos?" he asked, before accepting O'Halloran's hand, and being lifted onto his feet.

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE** and look out for the continuation of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

7. Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! (Part 7)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mom," Dustin yelled after bursting through the front door, almost stepping on Tews along the way.

His hands were filled with library books.

"I had to stop at the library after school," he explained, stumbling into the lounge. "It took almost an *hour*," he continued, his Mom rising from the sofa, "but I finally found a copy of the book Mr. Clarke recommended. *Primates and...*"

Looking up from his mini-collection of zoology books, Dustin noticed that his Mom had company.

Male company.

"...*Predators*," Dustin finished, his eyes wide and his jaw hanging open at the sight of the man in their living room.

"*Dusty*," his Mom said softly from across the room, "I thought you were playing your board game at Mike's tonight."

"Mike's in detention," Dustin explained. "And how many times do I have to tell you? It's not a board game, it's a *role-playing* game," he reminded her.

"I'm sorry, honey," she apologized, before exchanging an awkward look with her guest. "Uh... *Dusty*," she began clumsily, "this is Richard. He's a *Doctor*."

The Doctor was a short man in his 50s, his hair brown and curly. He wore a white coat and striped tie, and a pair of glasses with different colored lenses - one blue, the other red.

"What kind of Doctor?" Dustin asked curiously, earning him an

irritated look from his Mom.

"Well, Dustin, I specialize in the treatment of emotional and behavioral problems, *especially* amongst children," the Doctor explained, smiling devilishly. "This of me as a Doctor of the mind."

"Mental," Dustin uttered.

"Yes, *exactly*," the Doctor replied.

"Dusty," his Mom began, nervously stepping forward, "Richard has been visiting for a *while* now, and..." Sen glanced at the Doctor, who smiled encouragingly. "...and him and Mommy have become close," she explained, the Doctor wrapping an arm around her.

Dustin's eyebrows furrowed. "You're... *dating*?"

"Now, I *know* this may seem awkward, at first," the Doctor assured him, approaching Dustin, "but I can already tell that you and I are gong to become *good* friends." He smiled widely at Dustin. "I mean, how many kids your age are reading books on animal science?"

"Oh," Dustin uttered, looking down at the pile of books I his arms, "we have a Biology test tomorrow."

The Doctor smiled, then noticed the title of one of the books, reading it aloud. "'*The Entire History of Human Evolution*,'" he read. "Sounds like a pretty intensive test."

"Yeah, well, you can never be too careful," Dustin replied, returning the Doctor's hollow smile.

"You know," the Doctor began, looking down at him, "I've heard a lot about you, Dustin. And a lot about your *friends* too," he assured him. "*Mike, Lucas, Will... and the girl... El.*"

Dustin was shaken. He stepped back from the Doctor, who smiled cruelly, before Dustin fled to his room, his Mom calling after him along the way.

Bursting into his room, Dustin chucked the books onto his bed, then grabbed his walkie-talkie from the nightstand.

"Guys, this is Dustin," he said into the speaker. "This is a code red. I repeat, a code red!"

Dustin paused.

Silence.

"Does anyone copy? I think I've found the shapeshifter," he explained, clutching the handset, his volume low.

"I think it's dating my Mom," he whispered.

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE** and look out for the **CONCLUSION** of **Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7!**

8. Chapter 1: Stay Out of Room 7! (Part 8)

Chapter 1: Stay Out Of Room 7! continues...

3rd December, 1985

The sound of the chalk on the blackboard made Jane wince as she wrote the words: *I will not disrupt the curiosity voyage by talking during Mr. Clark's lessons*, for the sixth time.

She was to have written this fifty times before Mr. Clarke returned to the classroom.

When she heard the door to the classroom swing open, she feared that Mr. Clarke had returned early, and would scold her for not having finished writing all fifty lines. Luckily, looking over her shoulder, she was relieved to see Mike standing in the doorway.

However, when Jane noticed the look of disappointment on Mike's face, she almost wished it had been Mr. Clarke standing there instead.

Jane set the chalk down on Mr. Clarke desk and turned to face Mike. "Mike," she began, "I still have forty-four lines to go."

"You wouldn't have to be writing lines for Mr. Clarke at all if you hadn't been talking during his lesson," Mike replied, approaching Jane.

"The Shapeshifter," she began. "It's still out there."

Mike sighed. "El," he began, "there's nothing we can-

"Don't call me, that," Jane snapped. "That's *not* my name. It never *was*."

Mike was in shock. It had been a long time since he'd seen this kind of intensity within Jane.

"I'm sorry," he said sincerely, before looking at his feet.

"Mike," Jane began, "we're the *only* ones who can stop it."

Mike looked up at Jane, a worried look across his face. "I don't want to lose you again," he uttered.

Jane smiled. "You won't," she reassured him.

The two embraced. Behind them, the chalk continued to write on the blackboard, hovering in the air independently.

Jane's heart sank when she noticed a shape standing in the doorway.

This time, it *was* Mr. Clarke, whose eyes were glued to the piece of chalk hovering in the air, finishing off line forty-two.

Panicked, Jane pushed Mike away, and heard the piece of chalk hit the floor behind her.

Mr. Clarke turned his gaze to Jane and Mike, who looked up at him, their eyes wide.

"There's an 'e' in 'Clarke'," he commented.

"This is *awesome*!" Choky exclaimed, his eyes wide as he flicked through a copy of *Fantastic Four* #237.

"You like it?", Will asked, taking a seat on his bed next to Choky. "Here," he said, passing the boy another comic book. "Dustin gave me his copy of X-Men 134."

"X-Men?"

"You've never heard of the X-Men?" Will asked, shocked. "Haven't your parents ever bought you a comic book before?"

The boy turned away. "My parents aren't around," he explained, his smile fading. "Alvin takes care of me."

"Alvin... He's your Step-dad?"

"Something like that," said the boy, turning to face Will.

"I understand. Hopper's not my Dad, but he lives here now," Will explained. "Him and my Mom... they're *together*, so now him and Jane live with *us*."

"Is Jane your sister?" the boy asked.

"Something like that," Will replied, smiling. "Anyway," he continued, passing the boy the copy of *X-MEN #134*. "Here, take it. Storm, Cyclops, Professor X. They're *mutants*, and they have all these *amazing* powers that they use to help people."

"Mutants..." the boy uttered.

"Yeah, you know... It means they're *special*."

The boy grinned. "Thanks, Zombie Boy," he said gratefully.

"Hey, how about we use our *real* names when we're not being superheroes?" Will suggested, before extending an open palm. "I'm Will."

"Five," the boy replied.

"Your name is *Five*?" Will asked, confused. "Like the number?"

"It's the only name they ever gave me," Five replied.

"*Who*? What are you talking about?"

Five shifted his gaze from Will to the pile of comic books on the bedroom floor in front of them, his whole body tensing.

Suddenly, the comic books flickered, before being lifted into the air.

They remained in the air, floating, until they suddenly dropped to the floor.

Five relaxed, catching his breath.

"How did you do that?" Will asked, in shock.

Five turned to Will. He pointed to himself. "*Special*," he said.

Will's eyes widened as a realisation settled upon him. "*Five*," he uttered, before clutching Five's wrist, where he found the numbers 005 tattooed. "You've got one too!" he said. "Just like Eleven!"

"Eleven?" Five asked, confused.

"Yeah, Eleven, my sister."

"You mean Jane?"

"Jane's her *real* name," Will explained, "which means *you've* got one too, and she can help you find out what it is."

"No, you *can't* tell anyone," Five begged him.

"Don't you wanna know where you came from?" asked Will. "Don't you wanna find your parents? She can *help*," he assured him.

"Help... Like the X-Men?" Five asked.

"Yeah, that's right... Like the X-Men."

Be sure to leave a **REVIEW**, and remember to **FOLLOW/FAVOURITE**. Let me know what you've enjoyed about the story so far!

This story will be taking a short break, but will return soon for the start of **Chapter 2: The Telepath**, in which Hopper's investigation leads him somewhere close to home, Dustin tries to expose Dr. Tamblyn, and the truth about Eleven is at risk of being discovered.

See you then!

-G

9. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 1)

I hope you all had a Merry Christmas! Here is Part 1 of an all-new chapter. I hope you enjoy it!

3rd December, 1985

The chalk hit the floor, disturbing a long silence that had fallen upon the classroom.

"Mr. Clarke!" Mike yelled, panicking. "I can explain!"

"You can explain the piece of chalk I just saw levitating in the air and writing on my board?" his teacher asked, dryly. "Then consider my interested piqued."

Mike turned to El, who stood in front of the blackboard, her eyes wide with fear. "El... She has these... *abilities*," he explained vaguely.

"*Gifts*," El corrected.

"I thought your name was Jane," said Mr. Clarke, eyebrows furrowed with confusion.

"It *is*," El said, glaring at Mike.

"It's a long story," said Mike. "You might wanna sit down."

"Mike," Mr. Clarke began, sitting opposite his two students, "I've been teaching you since sixth grade.... Why didn't you think to tell me about any of this?"

"Because, if I had, the people who did this, they would have come after *you* too," Mike insisted.

"The 'Bad Men'?" asked Mr. Clarke.

"Yeah," said Mike.

"You said they took other children?" Mr. Clarke asked El.

El nodded shyly, her hands hidden up her sleeves.

"My nephew, Malcolm, he went missing when he was seven years-old," Mr. Clarke explained. "His father did everything he could, but the police, they closed the case after just a couple of weeks. Every time he tried to get the case reopened, the State police got involved, told him to bury it... that his son was *gone*. He tried hiring private detectives, but all of their trails ran cold." Mr. Clarke turned to El, his eyes narrowed. "You think there could be others out there like you?"

"I *know* there are," she assured him.

"Well," Mr. Clarke began with a grin, "what do you say we go out there and find them?"

CHAPTER 2:

THE TELEPATH

4th December, 1985

Hopper was reading today's edition of the *Indiana Echo*, which warned of winds strengthening from the east, bringing with them a thick mist that would be slow to clear.

In front of him, Joyce laid a plate of blueberry pancakes, a small knob of butter melting on top of the pile.

Hopper frowned, before glancing across the dinner table at Will. "This your idea?" he grumbled, and the boy shook his head.

"*Actually*, I thought it was about time we started eating a little *healthier* in this house," said Joyce, filling up a washing up bowl with hot water.

Hopper sighed, then reached for the bottle of maple syrup across the table.

Joyce snatched the bottle out of his grasp. "Jane, honey, it's time for

school!" she yelled down the hallway.

"Mom, is it okay if I go to my friend's house after school?" Will asked as he sliced through a blueberry pancake.

"Well, that depends, sweetie," Joyce replied, filling the washing up bowl with dirty pans and cutlery. "Do I *know* this boy?"

"His name's *Five*," Will answered. "He came over after school yesterday to read comic books."

"*Five*? What the hell kind of a name is that?" asked Hopper, his mouth full of dry pancakes.

"Where does this boy live?" Joyce asked.

"The Blue Bear Trailer Park, just off Randolph Lane," said Will.

"Oh, sweetie, no, I don't want you playing in one of those mobile homes," said Joyce, drying her hands with a dishcloth. "Those things are so *filthy*," she added, her face puckered.

"But, Mom, I told Five I'd lend him my copy of *Fantastic Four* #236!" Will complained.

"C'mon, Joyce, let him roll around in the mud, a little," Hopper suggested before taking a sip of coffee. "I'll pick him up after work."

"Well, alright," said Joyce, submissively. "Just tell Five's parents to call me if-"

"I know, I know," Will interrupted.

Noticing Jane marching down the hallway, across the lounge, and towards the front door, Hopper said, "Hey, look who's awake!"

"Honey, are you coming to have some breakfast?" Joyce asked her.

Jane paused, clutching the backpack over her shoulder. "Uh, *no*, thanks," she answered hesitantly, "I have to get to school."

"What, right *now*?" Hopper asked, confused.

"I... have a Chemistry test first period," Jane lied unconvincingly.
"Mike's taking me to the library to study."

"Okay, sweetie," said Joyce. "Good luck!"

Jane disappeared through the front door, and Hopper rose from his seat, pacing across the lounge and out of the front door, where he caught Jane on the porch, grabbing her shoulder.

"What's going on with you?" he asked Jane, who turned to face Hopper, an anxious look on her face.

"*Nothing*," she replied, avoiding Hopper's gaze.

"You know," Hopper began, "you never *were* a good liar."

"I'm just nervous about the test," Jane assured him.

On their lawn, Hopper noticed Mike, sitting on his bike. "Okay, well, make sure you spend the morning *actually* studying, alright?" said Hopper. "Not just staring into each other's eyes..."

Jane grinned, and nodded, before turning her back on Hopper and rushing down the porch towards Mike.

Jane climbed onto the back of Mike's bike, grabbing his waist.

"You alright, El?" Mike asked, looking over his shoulder.

Jane nodded. She could still feel the weight of Hopper's gaze upon her.

"You didn't tell him about what happened yesterday, did you?" Mike asked, referring to Mr. Clarke's discovery after school.

"No," she assured him.

Mike sighed. "Look, I know you don't like lying to Hopper, but you *know* how he'd react if he found out the truth," he said.

"Mike..." Jane began nervously.

"What?"

"*Friends don't lie.*"

Mike turned away from Jane, and began to pedal.

They didn't utter a word to each other all the way to school.

They stood in a passageway between Hawkins High School and the Gym, alone and unobserved by the other students, who were already rushing to the locker hall.

"We have to tell the others," said Jane, urgently.

"We *can't*," said Mike.

"Mike, we broke the rule of law, we have to-"

"This isn't a game, *El!*" said Mike, irritated. "What Mr. Clarke knows puts him in *serious* danger. Maybe even the whole *school*."

"All the more reason we should tell the rest of the party," Jane assured him. "They might be able to help!"

"If they find out that we told Mr. Clarke the truth, all they'll do is panic," Mike explained. He approached Jane, and put his hand on her shoulder. "We've just gotta keep our heads down."

Jane looked up at him, feeling uneasy. "What about the Shapeshifter?"

Mike rolled his eyes. "El..." he uttered.

"I saw it, Mike," Jane assured him, her eyes wide with intensity. "It's close. I can *feel* it."

"You *closed* the gate, El," Mike reminded her, before grabbing her hand, and gently squeezing it. "Those *monsters* are never gonna hurt anyone in Hawkins ever again."

Jane let go of Mike's hand, stepping back from him. "You don't know

that," she told him, before turning her back on him, and walking down the passageway.

In the distance, the schoolbell rang.

In the cafeteria, Lucas and Max sat alone, at the end of a long table.

"Why can't you just tell them what you saw?" asked Max.

"Because, O'Halloran said that he'd fire me if I told *anyone* about what I found in Room 7," Lucas explained, before filling his mouth with a slice of pizza.

"So, the old coot fires you? Who *cares*?" asked Max, indifferently.

"My parents, that's who," Lucas answered. "They'd lose their shit if I got fired."

"Well, you told *me* about what happened last night in that room, why not the rest of the party?"

"Because," Lucas began, his eyes wide, "*you're* smart enough to know *never* to go anywhere near that place."

"What place?" a voice asked from across the table.

Mike took a seat opposite them, placing his tray on the table in front of him.

"Oh, hey, Mike," said Lucas, nervously.

"Hey, have you guys seen El?" asked Mike, before taking a sip of Cola.

"Jane? Yeah, she's sitting right over there," said Lucas, pointing over Mike's shoulder, and across the cafeteria, where Jane was sitting on her own, biting into a sandwich.

Mike watched her, concerned.

"What's going on with you two?" Lucas asked.

"It's nothing," Mike assured him, before turning to face Lucas. "She's

just...got a Chemistry test, or something," he said, unconvincingly.

Suddenly, Lucas felt Max's elbow nudging his side. She nodded towards Mike, her eyes wide with expectancy.

"Something wrong?" Mike asked, confused.

Lucas sighed. He gave Max a disapproving look, before turning back to Mike. He leaned across the table. "I have to tell you something..."

"Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!" a voice interrupted.

Dustin slid into the seat next to Mike, slinging his backpack under the table. He was sweating, and out of breath. "Holy crap, you guys!"

"Dude, relax!" Max encouraged, as Dustin caught his breath.

"Where the hell were you guys last night?" asked Dustin. "I had a code red and *nobody* was picking up!"

"I was *working*," Lucas answered.

"Me and El had detention," said Mike.

"I have a *life*," Max teased.

Dustin grinned mockingly. "*Ha, ha*," he said sarcastically.

"Will was probably with that kid 'Choky'," said Mike.

"*Choky*?" Lucas echoed.

"Some boy in his History class... I don't know his *real* name... I just know that they've been hanging around with each other a lot lately," Mike explained, and Lucas was sure that he'd detected some jealousy within him.

"Can we stay on topic, *please*?" Dustin yelled. "This is *serious*!"

"What happened, Dustin?" asked Lucas.

"It's my Mom..." Dustin began. "I think she might be dating the Shapeshifter..."

"Your Mom has a *boyfriend*?" Lucas asked in disbelief.

"Why would your Mom be dating a monster from another dimension?" Mike asked, confused.

"Hey, have you *seen* Dustin's Mom?" Lucas teased, grinning widely.

"Do they have *sex*?" Max asked, causing Mike and Lucas to burst into raucous laughter.

"Ew, gross, you guys!" Dustin complained.

"Why do you think your Mom is dating the Shapeshifter?" asked Mike.

"*Because*, he knew about *Jane*, that's why!" Dustin explained. "He called *her* 'El'!" he added, before looking across the table. "Hey, where is El?"

Lucas pointed across the cafeteria, to the table where Jane sat, alone.

Dustin was confused. He turned to Mike. "What's going on?" he asked, concerned.

"It's nothing," Mike assured him.

"She's got a 'chemistry test'," said Lucas sarcastically, using air quotes.

"Just *drop it*, okay?" Mike snapped, and an awkward pause followed.

"So, he knew about El..." said Lucas. "Why does that *automatically* make him the Shapeshifter?"

"*Because*, idiot, no one even *knows* her real name except for us!" Dustin explained.

The table went quiet. Dustin sighed, and said, "Look, Jane said that she saw the Shapeshifter, and that *it* saw *her* too. Maybe this thing is trying to find her. Maybe it's using my Mom to get close to *me*."

"And close to *us*," said Lucas.

"And close to *El*," Mike added, before looking over his shoulder and watching Jane at her table.

"This doesn't make any sense," said Mike. "Jane *closed* the gate. So, how did this thing get out of the Upside Down?"

"Maybe there's a *new* gate," Lucas suggested.

"What do you mean?" asked Mike.

Lucas turned to Max, who stared at him expectedly. He turned to the others. "You guys know 'The Hive', right?"

"You mean that creepy Motel on Mulberry Street?" Dustin asked.

"That's right," said Lucas. "Well, my parents have got me working the evening shift there and, last night, I found *something* in one of the rooms."

"*Something*?" said Mike.

"*What*?" Dustin asked.

"I don't know but, whatever it was, it had a voice. It *called* me. And when I walked up to the door, there was this goo oozing from underneath the door, and then these vines reached out from the other side of the door and tried to grab me," Lucas explained. "They would have gotten me too, if it hadn't been for O'Halloran and his axe."

"Old Man O'Halloran?" Dustin asked, eyes wide with amazement.

"That's right. He's the caretaker at 'The Hive', and he told me not to tell *anyone* about what I found in that room, or he'd fire my ass," Lucas explained.

"That must be it," said Mike. "The new gate."

"Then this loser dating my Mom *could* be the Shapeshifter," said Dustin.

"How are you gonna find out for sure?" asked Lucas.

"Are you gonna eat that?" Max asked Lucas, pointing at the opened tub of frozen yoghurt on his tray.

"Max, do you mind?" Dustin yelled. "We're trying to come up with a plan, here!"

"Nah, it's all melted," said Lucas, passing Max the frozen yoghurt, "you can have it."

Dustin's eyes widened. "That's it..."

"*What?*" asked Lucas, confused.

"That's it!" Dustin yelled, grabbing his backpacking and rushing out of the cafeteria.

"What was all that about?" asked Max, grinning.

"We should go back to the gate," Lucas suggested. "*Tonight.*"

"You're right," Mike agreed.

"You think you could convince Jane to come along too?" Lucas asked.

Mike looked over his shoulder. Jane was gone. "I'm not sure," he admitted.

**Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/
FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

-G

10. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 2)

4th December, 1985

I Think We're Alone Now by Tommy James and the Shondells was playing on the radio as Jonathan drove along the highway.

"Big?" Nancy asked from the passenger seat, her eyebrows furrowed.

"Yeah," Jonathan replied, confidently. "*Big*."

Nancy grinned. "Okay," she began, "what makes you think we're onto something *big*?"

"C'mon, Nancy," said Jonathan. "You really think it's a coincidence that this Doctor up and disappears around the same time that Kenny's son goes missing?"

Nancy's eyes were forward. "Could be," she uttered.

"You know it's not," Jonathan replied, firmly.

Jonathan turned to Nancy, who gazed out the window. He sighed. "Look, Nancy," he began, "I know you're still sore on Gordon for sending you on what *you* might still think is just some wild goose chase, but I'm *telling* you, I think we could be onto something here."

Nancy turned to Jonathan, eyes narrow. "What makes you think the kid didn't just run away?" she asked.

"The look on his Dad's face," Jonathan answered.

Arriving at the Hospital, Nancy and Jonathan approached the reception, where a plump woman in her sixties sat, typing on a computer terminal.

At her desk, Nancy and Jonathan waited, watching as the receptionist hit the keys with her thick, wrinkled fingers, hitting one key at a time, and pausing at length between words.

Jonathan cleared his throat. The receptionist ceased her typing, and looked up at Jonathan, her eyes bulging behind her thick-rimmed spectacles. "Can I help you?" she asked in a low, monotone voice.

Nancy smiled warmly. "We're looking for a Dr. Tamblyn, please?" she asked, innocently.

"Who?" the receptionist asked, her face scrunched up in confusion.

"Dr. Tamblyn," Nancy replied. "He's a pediatrician at this Hospital."

The receptionist gazed back at her, an empty expression on her face. "Not *this* hospital," she assured her, before turning back to her computer terminal.

"Ma'am," Jonathan called, and the receptionist gazed up at him. He slammed a photograph of Kenny's son, riding a tractor, onto the desk. "A man named Kenny Clarke used to bring his son to this hospital to see Dr. Tamblyn *frequently*," he explained, speaking with authority unlike Nancy had ever seen before. "He was one of the Doctor's regular patients," he informed the receptionist, who gazed at the photograph. "Seven years ago, this boy went missing."

The receptionist continued to gaze at the photograph, and Nancy was certain that she'd noticed a look of remorse on her face. The receptionist removed her glasses, then looked up at them both. "You cops?" she asked.

Jonathan shook his head.

"We're just trying to find the boy," Nancy assured her.

The receptionist sighed, before rising from her chair. "Follow me," she instructed, before leading Nancy and Jonathan across the floor, and down a corridor.

The receptionist led Jonathan and Nancy into an empty waiting room, in the children's ward.

Butterfield, caterpillars, and other colorful shapes and patterns decorated the walls. In one corner sat an opened toy box; dolls, teddy

bears and toy cars littering the floor. In the far corner was an old television set. Adjacent to it was a couch, pushed to the wall.

At the center of the room, about a couple of dozen chairs had been laid out messily. Some formed rows that abruptly ended whilst others seemingly formed no pattern, and a couple had even been upturned and now lay on the floor.

Stood in the doorway, Nancy was confused. "*This* is Dr. Tamblyn's office?" she asked.

"It was," the receptionist explained, vaguely.

"Was?" Jonathan echoed.

The receptionist rolled her eyes. "Don't you understand?" she asked, her patience wearing thin. "Dr. Tamblyn doesn't work here anymore. He hasn't for years."

"Then where did he go?" Nancy asked.

The receptionist turned to Nancy, her eyes narrow. "That's classified," she said.

"*Classified?*" said Jonathan, stunned.

"There were rumors going round that, during his time here, Dr. Tamblyn was involved in some CIA-sanctioned research," the receptionist explained. "I never bought any of it, but when Richard transferred, he wasn't allowed to tell *any* of his colleagues where he was going," she continued. "He practically *disappeared*."

"Thanks for your help," Nancy said sincerely. "Do you mind if we take a look around?"

The receptionist shrugged her shoulders. "Be my guest," she said. "I dunno what you think you'll find. It's not like any of those rumors about Richard working for the CIA were *true*," she assured them, shaking her head. "People make up all kinds of stories to make the time pass quicker."

The receptionist stepped out of the waiting room, and Jonathan head

her high heels click all the way down the corridor, until he heard a door slam behind her. "*CIA-sanctioned research*?" he echoed to Nancy.

"That's what she said," Nancy assured him.

Jonathan grinned. "You still don't think we're on to something big?"

Nancy rolled her eyes. "Let's just search this place and get out of here," she suggested. "This place gives me the creeps."

Nancy began by searching the toy box in one corner of the room. Out of the box, Nancy lifted a Care Bear, a Transformer, an Etch-A-Sketch, and a Speak and Spell.

"That is correct," said the robotic voice from Speak and Spell. "Now spell: *Science*."

Nancy typed into the Speak and Spell; *S-C-I-E-N-C-E*.

Jonathan approached the television set in the far corner. Adjacent to it, a couch had been pushed to the wall.

"That is correct," the robotic voice from Speak and Spell repeated. "Now spell: *Experiment*."

"Seems a little tough for a kid," said Nancy, before typing into the Speak and Spell; *E-X-P-E-R-I-M-E-N-T*.

"That's weird," said Jonathan, approaching the couch.

"*What?*" asked Nancy, noticing Jonathan staring down at the couch.

"That is correct," the robotic voice from Speak and Spell repeated. "Now spell: *Laboratory*."

"In your living room, what is all of your furniture pointed towards?" he asked her.

Nancy shrugged her shoulders. "I dunno..."

"The TV," he explained, eyes wide. "*Always* the TV." He stared down at the couch, which pointed towards an empty room. "This is all

wrong."

Jonathan approached one end of the couch, then began to push it, grunting as he shifted it forward.

"That is correct," the robotic voice from Speak and Spell repeated. "Now spell: *Laboratory*."

"Would you shut that thing up?" asked Jonathan, grunting as he shifted the couch a few more inches forward.

Moving the couch had revealed a plain wall. Jonathan knelt down. Upon closer inspection, he noticed that one section of the baseboard was significantly less dusty than the rest.

Behind him, Nancy typed into the Speak and Spell; *L-A-B-O-R-A-T-O-R-Y*. She pressed the *ENTER* key.

"That is correct," said the robotic voice. "Welcome, Dr. Tamblyn".

Jonathan heard the shifting of gears, and suddenly, the section of baseboard he'd been inspecting lifted up, revealing a hollowed-out section of the wall.

"Nancy..." uttered Jonathan, and Nancy approached him.

"What is it?" asked Nancy, stood at his side.

"It's a hiding place," answered Jonathan, before reaching into the space in the wall. From inside, Jonathan pulled out a large case file, before glancing up at Nancy, eyes wide.

Nancy grinned at Jonathan, then read the letters on the front of the case file. It read: *PROJECT MK ULTRA. DR. RICHARD TAMBLYN*.

"Pass it here," said Nancy, extending her hand.

Jonathan rose to his feet, and passed Nancy the case file. He glanced over her shoulder, watching as she flicked through the file, landing on a page titled: *TEST SUBJECT: 005*.

At the top of the page, a polaroid print of a young boy wearing a

hospital gown, with a buzzed haircut, had been clipped to the paper.

"It's him," sad Jonathan, certainly. Nancy glanced at him, her eyes wide.

"*Malcolm Clarke*," said Nancy, reading from the page. "Oh my God," she uttered. "You're right."

"It says here that, during the early stages of the program, *Five* began showing signs of telekinetic and telepathic abilities," said Jonathan, before turning to Nancy. "*That* sure sounds familiar."

"We *have* to find this Doctor," said Nancy, before looking again at the photograph. "He's our *only* lead to the boy."

Jonathan nodded in agreement and grabbed Nancy's hand.

On the radio, *Somebody's Watching Me* by Rockwell was playing.

"I knew something was wrong when Kenny *first* talked about that creepy Doctor, but *this*? This is *crazy*," said Jonathan, driving fast along the highway, occasionally checking the rear view mirror.

"I don't think we should tell Jane," said Nancy, hesitantly.

"*What*?" Jonathan asked, confused. "We *have* to... She'll want to know that there are *others* out there like her."

"Think about it, Jonathan," Nancy replied. "These people... Their power, their influence... They don't seem to have *any* limit." Nancy turned to Jonathan, a look of anxiety on her face. "If we share what we found with Jane, all we'd be doing is putting her in danger. Her *friends*, too."

"Will..." Jonathan uttered, worryingly. "So, what do we do?"

"There's not a whole lot we *can* do," Nancy admitted. "Not if they're watching us."

Jonathan scoffed. "Oh, come on, Nancy, we're in the middle of nowhere," he assured her. "*No one* is watching us."

Behind them, a police siren blared.

"Shit," Jonathan cursed, noticing a State Trooper tailing them on a motorbike. "Shit!" he yelled, slamming the steering wheel.

Pulling to the side of the road, Jonathan noticed the State Trooper pull over right behind him, his siren silencing.

"What do I do?" Jonathan asked, his voice trembling.

"Just *relax*," Nancy advised, "and find out what he wants."

Rolling his window down, Jonathan could hear the State Trooper approach, his heels sinking into the grit.

The State Trooper approached, leaning down to Jonathan. He was in his 50s, and had a brown, bushy moustache. Jonathan could smell the tobacco he chewed in his mouth, and could see his own terrified reflection in the State Trooper's sunglasses.

"License, please," said the State Trooper, resting a hand on the car bonnet.

Jonathan nodded accordingly. "Yessir," he said, reaching into his pocket. He pulled out his wallet, and picked out his driver's license, before dropping it onto the floor.

Nancy rolled her eyes, and Jonathan apologized as he clumsily reached to the floor, blindly searching for his license, which he eventually found, and handed it to the State Trooper.

The State Trooper chewed, then spat, before removing his sunglasses, and inspecting the driver's license handed to him, his eyes darting between the license, Jonathan, and back to the license again. Without a word, he returned the driver's license to Jonathan.

"Was I going too fast, sir?" Jonathan asked awkwardly as he tucked his driver's license back into his wallet.

The State Trooper put his sunglasses back on. "You ran a stop sign a couple of miles back," he said, chewing tobacco.

"I didn't see any stop sign," said Nancy, leaning towards the window.

"Yeah, I..." Jonathan began, nervously. "I didn't see it, either."

"Well," the State Trooper began, his stare intense, "it's there."

Nancy sighed, then leaned back into her chair.

Jonathan's anxiety grew when he heard radio static and chatter from the State Trooper's motorbike.

The State Trooper looked over at his motorbike, then turned back to Jonathan. "You two sit tight," she said coldly, before returning to his motorbike.

Jonathan turned to Nancy. "There was *no* stop sign," he assured her.

"And even if there was," Nancy began, "why would a *State Trooper* pull you over for running one?"

Panicked, Jonathan watched the State Trooper through the rear view mirror. He spoke on the radio, and began to grasp the Smith and Wesson, in a holster on his belt.

"He's gonna kill us," said Jonathan, watching the State Trooper march towards them.

"We have to go," urged Nancy. "Drive!" she yelled, shaking his arm.

"He'd catch us," Jonathan assured her, still watching as the State Trooper marched towards them, lifting the revolver out of its holster.

"What do we do?" Nancy asked, panicking.

Watching him in the wing mirror, Jonathan could see that the State Trooper was only a few meters from his window, holding the revolver at his waist.

Jonathan clutched the handle, his eyes fixed on the State Trooper.

"Sir," said the State Trooper, "I'm gonna need you to step out of your-"

Jonathan swung open the car door, slamming it into the State

Trooper, knocking the breath out of his lungs.

There was a loud bang, and the State Trooper yelled in pain, before falling to the ground.

Jonathan and Nancy both hopped out of the car.

Jonathan climbed on top of the State Trooper, socking him in the jaw.

Nancy approached, and picked up the revolver, pointing it at the State Trooper. She noticed that his foot was bleeding, and realized that he must have accidentally shot himself in the foot.

Jonathan socked the State Trooper in the jaw again, knocking him unconscious, then rose to his feet, breathing heavily.

Jonathan noticed that Nancy was still pointing the revolver at the State Trooper. As he caught his breath, he gently grabbed Nancy's shoulder. She lowered the gun.

"We have to get out of here," said Jonathan, "in case he called for backup."

Nancy tucked the revolver into the back of her pants. "What do we do with *him*?" she asked, gesturing towards the State Trooper.

"I dunno," said Jonathan, trying to think. "Is he carrying handcuffs?"

"They must have bugged the car," said Jonathan, zooming along the highway with more drive than ever before.

"*What?*" asked Nancy, from the passenger seat.

"How else do you think that State Trooper knew to find us all the way out here?"

"Shit," Nancy cursed.

"We need to find it," said Jonathan. "The *bug*. We need to find it, and get rid of it."

"But, it could be hidden *anywhere*," said Nancy. "We'd have to take this whole car apart to be able to find it."

"I know," said Jonathan, his eyes on the road. "Which is *why* we're going where we're going."

Steve Harrington was halfway through changing a tire on a Cadillac Cimarron, which had suffered several punctures, causing its driver, Alvin, to break down eight miles outside of Hawkins, and to have to get towed to Dougie's Auto-Shop.

"So," Steve began as he unscrewed the wheel's lug nuts with a wrench, "how long have you lived in Hawkins?"

"About twelve years now," Alvin replied, standing over Steve, and watching him work. He was a small, thin man in his thirties with jet black hair swept all the way back. He wore a Hawaiian shirt, and smoked Marlboros. "It ain't exactly the City of Angels, but... I'll allow there are some nice folks here."

Steve looked up at Alvin, and smiled. "You got a wife?" he asked, unscrewing another lug nut. "Kids?"

Alvin took a drag of his cigarette. "Yeah, I got a little boy," he said, blowing smoke. "He's fifteen, now. Goes to school in Hawkins."

"Go Tigers!" Steve cheered, mockingly, even pumping his fist into the air.

After unscrewing the final lug nut, Steve gripped the tire by its treads, and began to gently pull it towards him.

"So, you went to school in Hawkins too, huh?" Alvin asked him, watching as he pulled the tire free from the hub. "I'm guessing shop class was your favorite, huh?"

Steve set the punctured tire to one side. He wiped the oil from his forehead as he let out a long sigh. "Hardly," he uttered.

"Hey, Steve!" yelled Ritchie, who came running over from the garage.

Steve rose to his feet, wiping his hands with a cloth. "What is it,

Ritchie?"

"Got a couple here who need their car servicing," said Ritchie, catching his breath.

"I'm halfway through changing a tire on this Cadillac, Ritchie," Steve complained. "Can't you do it?"

"I would, but they asked for your personally," Ritchie explained, still catching his breath from the short run from the garage.

Steve was confused. "Alright," he said, before slinging the cloth over his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Alvin, but Ritchie will take good of you," he assured Alvin, who smiled and waved Steve goodbye.

Approaching the garage, Steve recognized the Ford LTD parked outside, as well as the couple driving it.

"Nancy?" Steve asked, confused, as he approached his ex-girlfriend. "Jonathan," he uttered coldly, noticing him leaning on the car bonnet. "What are you two doing here?"

Nancy shared a concerned look with Jonathan, who nodded at her encouragingly. "We need your help," she said desperately.

Here we go again, was all Steve could think.

"Let me get this straight," Steve began, rubbing an aching forehead. "You *assaulted* a State Trooper, *stole* his gun, *handcuffed* him, and left him by the side of the road..."

"He was going to kill us!" Jonathan complained, a little *too* loudly for Steve's liking.

"Or, maybe he was just going to *arrest* you," Steve suggested. "You ever think about *that*?"

"He wasn't going to arrest us," Nancy began. "He was trying to *silence* us, because..." Her voice trailed off, and she shared a concerned look with Jonathan, before turning back to Steve. "Because of what we *know*."

There was a pause, and Steve shook his head, his patience wearing thin. "*What? What* do you know?"

Nancy looked down at her feet. "I can't tell you," she said, regretfully.

Steve nodded, having expected that answer from Nancy. "Well, if *you* can't tell me, then *I* can't help you," he said, before turning his back on them both.

"They bugged our car!" Jonathan yelled, causing Steve to stop in his tracks.

Steve turned around. "What'd you say, Byers?" he asked.

"They're watching us," Jonathan continued. "They're trying to make sure that we don't tell anyone about what we found."

"What'd you find?" Steve asked, curiously.

Jonathan glanced at Nancy. She nodded, and he clutched her hand. "Another test subject, like *Jane*," he explained. "This one's a *boy* – a *telepath*. We're trying to find the Doctor that took him."

Steve's eyes were wide. He ran a hand through his hair. "You've gotta be kidding me," he said.

Nancy handed Steve the case file, and let him flick through it, from cover to cover. "See for yourself," she urged him.

"I don't understand," said Steve, flicking through the case file. "I though we *stopped* the people at Hawkins Lab."

"We *did*," Nancy assured Steve. "*Temporarily*." She guided him through the case file, which dated back all the way to the early 1950s. "But this operation has been going on for years, and the people in charge? They're *powerful*."

Flicking to the next page, Steve noticed a photo of a kid in a hospital gown, with a buzzed haircut. "Who's this kid?" he asked.

"We think he might be a young boy who went missing in Bloomington seven years ago," Nancy explained. "We met his father,

Kenny, and he explained that he'd been taking his son to see a man named Dr. Tamblyn around the time he disappeared, and tha-

"Say that name again," Steve interrupted, staring intensely at Nancy.

"Dr. Tamblyn," Nancy repeated. "Dr. Richard Tamblyn."

"Do you know him?" Jonathan asked curiously.

"No, but..." Steve began, "but, he was *here*, at the garage, just a few days ago..."

"Did he say where he was going?" Nancy asked.

Steve, eyes wide, searched his memory. "The Hive," he said.

"The Motel? On Mulberry Street?" Jonathan asked.

"Yeah, he told me he had work in Hawkins," Steve explained, which seemed to strike fear in both Nancy and Jonathan.

Nancy snatched the case file out of Steve's hand and turned to Jonathan. "We need to go," she decided.

"What about our car?" Jonathan asked. "It's still bugged!"

"We can take mine," Steve offered.

"What?" said Nancy, confused. "You're *not* coming with us!"

"You just told me that these people tried to pull a *gun* on you, of *course* I'm coming with you!" Steve yelled.

"Oh, so, *now* you believe me?" Nancy asked, angrily.

"Hey, guys!" Jonathan tried to interrupt, but to no avail.

"Nancy, I'm just trying to help you!"

"I didn't *ask* for your help, Steve Harrington!"

"No, you didn't! You and your *boyfriend* just went off on your own little adventure, just like you always do, with no regard for the

people who actually *care* about you!"

"GUYS!" Jonathan yelled, and Nancy and Steve turned to him.

"What is it, Jonathan?" Nancy asked.

Jonathan chuckled. "Can we get *going* already?" he asked, frustrated.

Nancy nodded, then turned to Steve. She gave him a disapproving look, then walked straight past him.

Steve pulled his car keys out of his pocket, and threw them at Jonathan, who caught them in his hands.

As Jonathan and Nancy climbed inside Steve's BMW 733i, parked opposite the garage, Ritchie approached Steve, a concerned look on his face. "Stevie," he began, "what's going on here?"

"I'm sorry, Ritchie," Steve apologized, sincerely. "I've gotta go," he said before walking straight past him, and towards his car.

"What?" Ritchie asked, chuckling, and following Steve. "You're kiddin'!" Ritchie's smile faded when he realized that Steve *wasn't* kidding. "Steve, come one, what am I supposed to tell your Dad?"

Steve paused. "Tell him..." He hesitated. He hated to imagine his father being disappointed in him, but he knew what he had to do. "Tell him that I appreciate his offer... But I can't take it," he said to Ritchie, before approaching his car.

"And tell him I'm sorry," Steve added before climbing inside his car, and driving away with Nancy and Jonathan in tow, following the road towards Hawkins.

**Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/
FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

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11. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 3)

4th December, 1985

"Albert Einstein said that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion," Mr. Clarke began, speaking with upmost enthusiasm from the front of the class.

Jane through page 12 of *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory* by Albert Einstein, which Mr. Clarke had noted on the blackboard. However, the words failed to resonate with her, despite Jane having read the same page from top to bottom multiple times. Her mind was distracted, still fixated on the conversation her and Mike had had that morning, before school.

She feared that they were becoming distant.

"We believe that time is *linear*," he said, drawing a line in chalk on the board. "But, in reality, yesterday, today, and tomorrow are *not* consecutive. In reality, past, present and future all exist *simultaneously*," he explained, drawing a circle next to the line. "In our timeline, today is December 4th, 1985. This morning, I had a bowl of Bran Flakes for breakfast, a cup of coffee, I dragged a comb across my hair..." The class giggled, and Mr. Clarke smiled playfully. "And, I got into work around 8:16am. *But*, in *another* timeline, things could have gone very differently."

The door swung open, and Mike stepped into the classroom.

"Ah, good of you to join us, Mr. Wheeler," said Mr. Clarke, checking his watch.

Hurrying to his desk, Mike took a seat next to Jane, slinging his backpack under his desk.

"In an alternative timeline, Mike, here, may have been right on time for this afternoon's lesson," said Mr. Clarke, and a few students chuckled.

"Where were you?" Jane asked, as Mike slid into his seat.

"Lunch," he answered, pulling an exercise book and textbooks out of his backpack, and laying them on his desk. "It's Lucas..." he began, whispering across the classroom. "Something happened to him at work last night."

At the front of the class, Mr. Clarke was looking down his nose at Mike, whose conversation had interrupted his lesson.

"But, it can wait," Mike decided, before returning to his books.

"As I was saying," Mr. Clarke continued, "the future is *not* written. Not for *this* timeline. It's up to you to write it. So, make sure you study for Monday's test, otherwise, a *future* is one thing you *won't* have."

The classroom emptied, students with backpacks over their shoulders and textbooks under their arms hurrying through the door, and into the hallway.

Mike approached Mr. Clarke's desk, where his teacher was wiping the blackboard clean.

"Mr. Clarke?" Mike uttered. Beside him, he noticed El approaching the desk. "You wanted to see us after class?"

"That's right," said Mr. Clarke, the last few students exiting the classroom, leaving just the three of them. Mr. Clarke turned to face them, his eyebrows furrowed; *focused*. "I called your parents," he said, "and I told them that you're going to be at AV Club after school today."

Mike was confused. "But, AV Club is always on a *Wednesday*," he reminded Mr. Clarke. As much as he'd been looking forward to Mr. Clarke's demonstration of his 35mm movie projector, he'd already promised Lucas and Max that he would meet them after school, so that they could go to *The Hive*, and found out what was going on in Room 7.

Mr. Clarke wore a nervous expression. "I lied," he admitted, and Mike and El shared a concerned look. "Truth is," he began, "I need your help."

"What is it?" El asked, worried.

Mr. Clarke leaned over his desk. "You remember my brother? *Kenny*?" asked Mr. Clarke. He'd told them *both* about his brother just yesterday in detention, after discovering the truth about El and her abilities. "I told you about his son – my *nephew* – *Malcolm*."

"He went missing," Mike recalled. "No one ever found him."

Mr. Clarke nodded. "Kenny's always been convinced that his son was *taken* from him," he explained. "*Abducted*, he thinks," Mr. Clarke continued, before turning to El. "But after the stories you told me yesterday... Children *taken* from their homes and turned into test subjects, never to be heard from again... I'm wondering whether my brother could have been right all along."

"You want to go see him," Mike thought aloud. "You think we could find him."

"Malcolm's trail may have run a little cold for *some* people," said Mr. Clarke, before turning back to El, "but I here *you* have a particular skill for finding people, whether they want to be found or *not*."

"If he's out there, I'll find him," El promised.

Mike turned to El, feeling anxious. "El, *think* about it," he suggested. "What if this kid's *still* a prisoner? We could end up walking straight into a trap!"

"Mike," said El, "do you remember the night you, Dustin and Lucas found me in the forest?"

"Of course," Mike replied confidently. "It was the first night I met you. There was a storm that night."

"And if you hadn't have found me, I might never have made it out alive," she explained. "We *have* to help."

Regretfully, Mike agreed.

"Listen," Mr. Clarke began, "I'm not suggesting any kind of *rescue mission* here," he assured them both. "I just want you to tell my

brother what you told me. He deserves to know that there's a *chance* that his son is still alive."

El nodded, and Mr. Clarke smiled.

"Meet me behind the gymnasium after fifth period," he instructed, his voice having hushed to a whisper. "I'll speak to Mr. Mundy, and tell him that you won't be able to make it to Math class this afternoon."

On any other day, Mike would have been happy to be able to skip one of Mr. Mundy's classes, but he just couldn't shake the bad feeling he had about all of this.

"Don't worry," said Mr. Clarke, "I'll be sure to have you back before dinner."

**Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/
FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

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12. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 4)

4th December, 1985

Mayor Schumacher was pacing up and down his study, occasionally pausing in front of a roaring fireplace where he'd rub his forehead, then return to his anxious striding.

"They called eighty minutes ago with instructions," he explained. "They want you to stash the money in a locker at Hawkins Bus Station. Here's the key," he said, taking a small, gold key out of his pocket, and throwing it to Hopper.

Hopper caught the key. He sat, relaxed, in a leather armchair. In front of him, he'd laid a briefcase on a coffee table. He was plain-clothed, having left his uniform in his wardrobe.

"One person only," the Mayor continued. "They were very clear on that. *One person only*, or *I'd go with you*."

Hopper examined the key. The keyring was engraved, and read: LOCKER 207. He tucked it into his pocket. "Have you spoken to *anyone* else?" he asked calmly.

The Mayor seemed confused. "What? *No*. Of course not," he replied. "You think I want any word of this reaching the press?" he asked, his forehead sweaty. "*No*. The only person I've even *tried* to contact today, *besides* you, has been Brandy, and she's not even returning my calls," he explained. "She's probably pissed off with me for getting her *into* this mess."

"Just *don't* tell anyone that you spoke to me," Hopper instructed, rising from his seat. "Your *mistress* isn't the only one wishing she wasn't caught up in this."

"Hey, this is *extortion*," the Mayor reminded Hopper. "That's *still* a crime, where *I* come from."

"And that's *exactly* why I'm gonna make sure this guy goes behind bars," Hopper promised, pointing a finger in the Mayor's face.

"Oh yeah?" the Mayor asked, nervously. "You *really* think this plan will work, then?"

"I *know* it will," Hopper answered confidently.

The Mayor seemed unconvinced. He turned to the briefcase, picking it up, and feeling its weight. "Jeez," he uttered. "That's *heavy*."

"That's right, if this is gonna work, the ringer *cannot* feel empty," Hopper tried to explain, but the Mayor only seemed *more* confused.

"The *ringer*?" he asked, his eyebrows furrowed.

Hopper grinned. "Haven't you ever *seen* a Humphrey Bogart flick?" he asked, before grabbing the suitcase out of the Mayor's hand, and walking out of the room.

"Listen, Jim, do me a favor, would ya?" the Mayor asked.

"For you, Lawrence? *Anything*," Hopper answered, sarcastically.

"You find this guy, you bring him to *me* first," he requested. "I'm hoping that him and I can come to some kind of... *arrangement*."

Hopper stopped in his tracks, then turned to face the Mayor. "*Arrangement*?" he echoed, confused.

"Jim," the Mayor began, modestly, "this guy is threatening to destroy my *family*, my *career*. You could put him *under* the jail... There's still no *guarantee* that he won't find some way of talking to the papers."

"That's *your* problem, *not* mine," Hopper reminded him coldly, before turning his back on the Mayor.

"I draw a *lot* of water in this town, Jim," the Mayor reminded Hopper. "If you let this guy talk, it'll be the *end* of my career."

"Fine by me," said Hopper, on his way out the study.

"And I'll make sure it's the end of *yours* too," the Mayor promised, which stopped Hopper in his tracks. "I'll have your *badge*, Jim," he said coldly. "You screw me over, and I'll have your badge."

The study fell silent, aside from the crackle of burning wood. Hopper turned to face the Mayor, approaching him slowly. Mayor Schumacher looked up at him, his eyes wide. He trembled.

"Listen to me *carefully*," he instructed, staring intensely at the Mayor. "I'm gonna find this guy, and I'm gonna bring him to you," he promised. "And I'm not gonna breathe a word of this to Callahan or Powell or anyone else at the station." He leaned closer to the Mayor, his voice hushing to a whisper. "But if you *ever* threaten me again, I'll kick you out of this town *myself*."

Hopper turned his back on the Mayor, left the study, and walked out of the front door, leaving Mayor Schumacher alone and trembling, and now *fully* aware of the unstoppable force he'd unleashed on his blackmailer.

It was four o'clock, and Hawkins Bus Station was bustling.

In the seating area, Hopper read today's edition of the *Indiana Echo*, his eyes occasionally drifting beyond the sports section on page eleven, to check up on the row of lockers across the station, in the middle of which was Locker 207.

The trap was set, and Hopper was waiting.

Moments later, an elderly woman approached him. "Excuse me, this is where I catch the bus to Kansas City, isn't it?" she asked in a gentle voice.

Hopper was stunned. Forgetting that he wasn't in uniform, he hadn't expected to be approached by a member of the general public so casually. "Uh, *yeah*, I *think* so," he replied apprehensively.

"Thank *goodness*," the old man exclaimed, before collapsing into the seat next to Hopper, who ignored her, and continued to flick through his newspaper. "I'm going to see my *grandson*," she explained, smiling happily.

"Is that right?" Hopper replied apathetically, before looking up at the row of lockers, where Locker 207 remained untouched.

"He goes to *school* in Kansas City," the old woman explained, "and his Mother's *awfully* sick." From out of her handbag, the old man revealed a plastic contained, filled with biscuits. "He's been under an awful lot of stress lately, so I thought I'd bring him some Coconut Macaroons," she said, before lifting the lid off the contained, and offering the biscuits to Hopper. "They're *homemade*," she said, smiling.

"Oh, no, *thanks*," Hopper declined, "I'm on a diet."

"Oh," the old woman uttered, before placing the lid back on the plastic container, and putting it back in her bag. "Bobby always *loved* Coconut Macaroons," she said, smiling, before turning back to Hopper. "Do *you* have any children?"

Hopper lowered his newspaper, and rubbed his forehead. "I have a daughter," he replied, his thoughts with Jane, who would be on her way home from school right now. "She's fifteen."

The old woman's smile widened, revealing a crooked set of teeth. "What's she *like*?" she asked.

"Jane?" Hopper asked. "She's..." His mind drifted back to his *last* conversation with Jane, during which she'd *lied* to Hopper, and had run off with Mike. "She's nothing but trouble," he said, grinning.

"All kids that age *are*," the old woman replied, smiling.

Hopper chuckled, then looked over at the row of lockers, where he noticed a man in a Hawaiian shirt closing Locker 207, before strolling across the bus station, the briefcase in his hand.

"Gotcha," Hopper uttered, before urgently rising from his seat, and rushing across the bus station.

"It was nice meeting you," he heard the old woman yell as he followed the man in the Hawaiian shirt out of the bus station, and into the street.

Hopper watched as the man in the Hawaiian shirt climbed into a Cadillac Cimarron.

Luckily, Hopper had parked just up the block. He rushed to his SUV,

and climbed inside, noticing the blackmailer's Cadillac drive past as he started the ignition.

Hopper followed the Cadillac, keeping a couple of car's distance between them all the way.

Twenty minutes later, the blackmailer pulled into a trailer park just off Randolph Lane.

Pulling into the trailer park, Hopper noticed a large wooden sign that read: BLUE BEAR TRAILER PARK.

His SUV came to a halt, and across the trailer park, Hopper noticed the blackmailer climb out of his Cadillac, still clutching the briefcase, and enter his trailer, slamming the door behind him.

Outside, Hopper noticed two bicycles laying on the grass, one of which was a BMX, and Hopper recognized it well.

"Will," he uttered.

Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

In the meantime, here is a short teaser for the rest of Stranger Things 3, to give you a taste of what's to come.

(Just copy this link and add it to YouTube's URL!) /watch?v=zKsFKATxhdc

-G

13. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 5)

4th December, 1985

"That's Jean Grey," Will explained, pointing at the double-page spread in his copy of *X-Men* 137. "She's *telekinetic*. That means she can levitate objects with her mind, just like *you*!"

"Not exactly," Five replied. "I can't move entire *cities*."

"Neither could Jean Grey – not at *first*," Will assured him, flicking through the comic, and to a page where a red-headed woman, dressed in yellow and green spandex, soared through the sky, riding a wave of fire. "But *then*, she discovered that she had this *energy* inside of her. *The Phoenix Force*," he said, excitedly. "You just need to find *your* Phoenix Force."

Five sighed, then said, "Will, I'm *not* a superhero. I'm just a kid who was *poked* and *prodded* and *experimented* on by a bunch of lunatics."

"I know," said Will, upset. "I'm *sorry*."

Five noticed the drawing of a bald man in a wheelchair, and pointed to him. "Who's *that*?" he asked, hoping to cheer Will up.

"Oh, that's Professor X," said Will. "He's a telepath. That means, he can read people's *minds*!"

"I know what a *telepath* is," Five replied, confidently.

Will's eyes widened. He stared at Five. "You can read minds *too*, can't you?"

Five shuffled nervously. "Yeah," he answered, modestly.

"Alright," said Will, assertively, casting the comic book aside. "What am I thinking?" he asked.

Five rolled his eyes. "Will..." he complained.

"C'mon," Will coaxed. "What am I thinking *right now*?"

Five sighed, before returning Will's gaze. He pressed two fingers to his temple, causing Will to giggle with excitement.

Five leaned closer, staring deep into Will's brown eyes, until those brown eyes engulfed him and-

Darkness.

Suddenly, Five found himself stood in the middle of a small, dark town. The air was cold, and his vision was clouded by a deep, widespread fog. The streets were overgrown with ropy, root-like tendrils that stretched across the town, and climbed the buildings, covering practically *every* surface.

He was alone in this dark, cold place.

Behind him, Five could hear the noise of thunder. He turned, and in the distance, he saw a gathering storm. Bolts of red lightning shot from a whirlwind of fire, and when the clouds parted, they revealed an enormous, spider-like creature, a flame-shaped head sprouting from his body, which was mostly hidden in the shadows.

Slowly, the shadow monster marched towards him.

Five stepped back, only to trip on one of the vines spread across the street, and landing on his back.

As the shadow monster approached him, a tendril of shadows slithered towards him through the air. Five could feel the air around getting colder as the tendril glided towards him and-

"Five!" Will yelled, shaking his shoulders, until Five's eyes opened, and he breathed in a lungful of air. "Are you okay?" he asked, as Five caught his breath.

"I *saw* something," Five revealed, as he rubbed his throat. He'd felt as though he was about to drown. "A *monster*... Made of *shadows*..."

Will's eyes widened. "The Mind Flayer," he uttered nervously.

"*What?*" Five asked, confused.

Will grabbed Five by the shoulders. "What *happened?*" he asked, urgently.

"I saw him," said Five, still trembling. "And, I think... He saw *me*."

Suddenly, the door burst open, and a man in a Hawaiian shirt rushed into the trailer. He was small and nimble, and had jet black hair, swept back.

"Alvin!" said Five, alarmed, and rose to his feet.

"Hey, shiner," said Alvin, who strode into the lounge, carrying a briefcase. He messed Five's hair, and chuckled, before saying, "You did *good*, kid!"

"What happened?" asked Five.

"That *schmuck* paid up, *that's* what happened," Alvin replied, smiling greedily.

"What's going on?" asked Will, approaching Five's side.

Alvin was stunned by his appearance. He slammed the briefcase onto the coffee table before asking, "Who's *this?*"

"Uh, this is my friend from school," said Five, nervously. "Will Byers."

Alvin gave Five a disapproving look, and said, "*Five*, right now ain't the best time for *play school*."

"I'm sorry," Five apologized, before grabbing Will's shoulder. "We'll get out of here."

Five was leading Will to the front door when he heard Alvin yell, "Son of a bitch!" Turning around, and approaching Alvin, Five saw him plucking a pair of underwear out of the briefcase, holding it in front of him, a look of rage on his face.

Looking out the window, Five noticed a large SUV parked across the trailer park. Painted on the side were the words: HAWKINS POLICE DEPT.

"Alvin!" Five yelled, across the trailer, where Alvin was still cursing, pulling nothing but underwear, socks, and shirts out of the briefcase.

Suddenly, there was a loud pounding on the door, and the trailer shook. "Hawkins Police!" a voice yelled. "Open up!"

"Shit," Alvin cursed, his head in his hands.

Five grabbed Will's shoulder. "We've gotta get out of here," he urged.

"You!" Alvin yelled, pointing a finger at Will. "*Byers*, was it?"

The pounding at the door continued, and the voice at the door yelled, "This is Chief Jim Hopper! Open up!"

"Ain't you the *Chief's* kid?" Alvin asked, his fists curling with rage.

"*What?*" Five asked, turning to Will, who was trembling with fear.

"You little shit!" Alvin yelled, marching across the trailer, and towards Will. "I'll *kill* you!"

"NO!" Five yelled, reaching out towards Alvin.

At that moment, time seemed to slow down.

Around him, the coffee table, the TV, the couch, and many other object *all* lifted into the air, as if gravity no longer existed.

Below him, Five could hear the grinding of metal, and the splintering of wood, and suddenly, he could feel his stomach dropping.

"Five!" Will yelled beside him, clinging on the his shoulder.

In front of them, Alvin hovered in the air, his hands still reaching out towards the two boys. Around him, pairs of underwear, socks and shirts all floated weightlessly.

Looking out the window, Five could see that they were floating more than fifty feet *above* the trailer park. Below them, the other trailers had shrunk to the size of building blocks, and the Police Chief, who gazed up at them, appeared no bigger than an ant.

"Five, you *have* to put us down!" Will yelled, still clinging onto Five's shoulder.

Five closed his eyes, breathing deeply. He could feel his stomach churn as they fell slowly to the ground, the leaves rushing like a whirlwind around them as they landed on the grass, in the middle of the trailer park.

With a thud, Alvin hit the floor.

Suddenly, Five felt Will's hand clutching his, and his heart raced. "We have to go!" he urged.

Five nodded, and the boys ran.

After kicking the door down, Hopper stepped into the trailer, his revolver aimed down the hallway.

He felt a crunch as he walked over broken glass, and towards the lounge, where the furniture was upturned, and the man in the Hawaiian shirt was lying on his back.

Hopper rushed towards him, pointing his revolver down at the blackmailer, who groaned as he rubbed his forehead. He opened his eyes, and noticed Hopper. "Ah, *shit*," he cursed.

"Where did they go?" Hopper asked. "The *boys*, where did they go?"

The blackmailer rubbed his eyes, then looked across the trailer, beyond Hopper, before raising his arm and pointing.

Turning around, Hopper saw an open window, the curtains blowing in the wind.

"Dammit," said Hopper, before holstering his revolver.

He was too late.

"I can't run any farther," said Will, before coming to a halt.

They were in the middle of the forest, and Five took a seat on a tree stump, wiping his sweaty brow.

Will was panting, his hands on his knees. "What the hell happened back there?" he asked as he caught his breath.

"I don't know, I just..." Five hesitated. "I lost control."

"Yeah, I *saw* that," Will replied.

"You know," Five began, stepping off of the tree stump, and approaching Will, "you could have told me that your *Dad* was the Police Chief!"

"I didn't know *your* Dad was a *thief*!" Will replied, angrily.

"He's not a *thief*," Five assured him. "He only *steals* from people who *deserve* it... People who've been stealing from *us* our whole lives."

"Listen, Five," Will began, grabbing his friend by the shoulders, "what you *saw* back there in the trailer was something *evil*."

Five nodded calmly. "I know" he replied. "I could *feel* it." Just the thought of that dark, cold place, and the evil lurking within it, was enough to make Five shudder.

"Then you know how powerful this thing is," said Will. "And I *know* that what just happened was scary, but..." He hesitated, looking deep into Five's eyes. "I think you might be the only one powerful enough to stop it."

Five shook his head. "No, I... I *can't*..." he assured Will. "They're all going to be looking for me now," he said. "I *have* to get out of this town."

"No," urged Will, clutching onto his shoulders. "I can *help* you," he promised. "Because I'm the *only* ones who understands what you *really* are."

Five sighed. "Alright, Will Byers," he said, calmly. "So, what *am* I?" he asked.

"You're my friend," said Will, before pulling Five into a warm embrace.

In the middle of the forest, the two boys shared a hug whilst, in the distance, a storm gathered.

The thunder growled.

**Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/
FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

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14. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 6)

4th December, 1985

There was a knock at the door, and Dustin swung it open.

"Hiya, Dustin," greeted Dr. Tamblyn, stood on their doorstep. He held a bouquet of flowers, and a bottle of red wine. He wore a cotton suit jacket over a striped shirt, and a paisley tie.

"Dr. Tamblyn..." said Dustin, guarding the doorway.

"Oh, please, call me Richard," the Doctor insisted. He smiled cheerfully, his eyes bulging behind the red and blue lenses of his glasses.

"Okay... *Richard*," said Dustin, his eyes narrowed.

There was a long, awkward silence, as the Doctor stood on their doorstep, shivering in the cold.

"Well, Dustin, you're the man of the house... Are you gonna invite me in?" he asked, smiling.

Dustin stepped back, holding the door open. "Come on in," he said.

"Thank you," said the Doctor, stepping into their house.

"Richard!" His Mom approached, holding a pan filled with garden peas. "I didn't hear you come in," she said, smiling happily.

"Claudia!" the Doctor exclaimed, excited. "Isn't it bad luck for the guest to see the food before dinner?"

"Oh, you're thinking of the Groom seeing the Bride before the Wedding!" his Mom insisted, giggling.

"Oh, yeah," the Doctor realized. "You know, I'm *always* getting those confused," he said, laughing playfully.

Dustin scoffed, and rolled his eyes.

"I got you *these*," said the Doctor, handing his Mom the bouquet of flowers.

"Oh, Richard, you *shouldn't* have," his Mom insisted, as she reached out to take the flowers.

Dustin panicked. He snatched the bouquet out of the Doctor's hands. "My Mom's *allergic* to daisies," he explained.

"*Dusty!*" his Mom complained, glaring at Dustin.

"Oh, I'm *sorry*," the Doctor apologized awkwardly. "I had no idea..."

Over in the kitchen, Dustin could hear flames hissing, as boiling water overflowed in a pan.

"Excuse me, those potatoes are boiling!" his Mom said, before returning to the kitchen.

"They're not the only thing," said the Doctor, wiping sweat from his brow. "It's like a *sauna* in here!"

"What's the matter, Doc?" Dustin asked, his suspicion growing. "Too *hot* for you?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, *yes*," the Doctor insisted before taking off his jacket.

"Dusty, honey," his Mom yelled from the kitchen. "Would you take Richard's jacket and hang it up, please?"

Dustin sighed, before holding out his hands. The Doctor handed him his jacket, and Dustin marched down the hallway to go and hang it up.

Along the way, Dustin paused. Looking over his shoulder, he noticed his Mom and the Doctor were laughing in the kitchen.

The thermostat was on the wall, and had been set to 90 . Dustin turned the knob, increasing the temperature to 100 . He smiled cruelly, then hung up the Doctor's jacket on the coat hanger.

Dustin approached the dinner table. Three mats had been laid out over a linen table runner, a lit candle placed between them.

"Please, Richard.. Take a seat," his Mom insisted, before turning to Dustin. "*Dusty*, it's *scorching* in this house. Have you turned the thermostat up?" she asked as she fanned herself.

"No, it's only on 70 ," he lied. "It has been *all* night."

"Oh... It must just be all this *cooking*," his Mom said, wiping sweat from her brow.

"Do you want some help?" Dustin offered.

"Yes, please, Dusty," his Mom replied as Dustin followed her into the kitchen. "There are some plates warming up in the oven... Take them out and lay them on the table, would you?"

"Okay, Mom," said Dustin, before reaching into the oven, and grabbing the pile of hot plates with an oven mitt, and placing them on the counter.

Looking over his shoulder, Dustin noticed his Mother was busy mashing potatoes. He grabbed a cloth, wrapped it around his hand, and grabbed just one of the plates, before taking it through to the dinner table.

Approaching the dinner table, Dustin held out the plate, offering it to Dr. Tamblyn.

The Doctor rose from his seat, smiling. "Ah, thank you, Dustin," he said, before reaching out and grabbing the plate. As soon as he grasped the plate, he cried out in pain, before dropping the plate. It hit the floor, and shattered.

"What was that?" his Mom yelled from the kitchen.

"Uh, *nothing*!" the Doctor assured her, caressing his hand. "Just a little accident... Nothing to worry about," he continued, before turning to Dustin. "*Dustin*! I could have burned my hand!" he said, angrily.

"*Dusty*! I *told* you those plates had just come out of the oven," his

Mom yelled, approaching the dinner table. She sighed, then said, "Let me get a sweeping brush."

Dustin's eyes narrowed as he watched the Doctor rub his hand, grimacing at the pain. He had hoped for something a little more *dramatic*, considering how much the creatures from the Upside Down *hated* heat.

The Doctor began to chuckle and, looking down at his feet, he saw Tews, rubbing up against his leg, meowing.

"Oh, hey there, Kittie," he said, smiling at the kitten.

Dustin's stomach dropped. He watched as the Doctor reached out to pick up Tews, remembering what had happened to poor Mews.

"No! Get *away* from him!" Dustin yelled, waving his arms at Tews, before hissing violently at the kitten.

Tews screeched, before running off.

"Dusty, *what* has gotten *into* you?" his Mom asked, glaring at Dustin.

"It's alright, Claudia," the Doctor insisted. "Why don't we just sit down and wait for dinner?"

Dustin nodded, before taking a seat at the dinner table opposite the Doctor, his Mom returning to the kitchen.

"So, Dustin, what's your favorite subject at school?" he asked.

"Science," Dustin answered confidently.

"Ah, a fellow man of Science," said the Doctor, smiling.

"Mr. Clarke has been teaching us about evolution, and how different species *evolve* to survive," Dustin continued. "Did you know, the Leafy Sea Dragon can move its body *just* like a piece of seaweed, which helps it to blend in with its surroundings..."

"*Fascinating*," the Doctor said, focused. "Did *you* know, Dustin, that the human eye can see more shades of green than *any* other colour?"

Dustin shook his head.

"Do you know *why*?" the Doctor asked.

"To hide from predators?" Dustin guessed.

"Or... to catch their *prey*," the Doctor revealed, smiling devilishly, and Dustin's anxiety grew.

"Dinner's ready!" his Mom announced, serving Dustin and the Doctor a plate of steak, mashed potato, and roasted vegetables each.

Opposite him, the Doctor poured two glasses of red wine, and his Mom returned with her plate, taking a seat at the head of the table.

"*Claudia*... This looks..." the Doctor began, sniffing the meat like a wild animal gushing over its prey, which made Dustin nervous. "*Magnificent*," he said, smiling at Dustin's Mom, who laughed.

"I sure hope it tastes so, too," she said.

The Doctor raised his glass of red wine, gazing at Dustin's Mom. "*Cheers*," he said.

Dustin's Mom giggled, before raising her own glass. "*Cheers*," she echoed, and the two clinked their glasses.

Dustin could only watch helplessly, as the Doctor smiled, and leaned in to *kiss* Dustin's Mom.

Horried, Dustin panicked. He lifted his leg, and kicked the edge of the table, which knocked over the candle stick, and caused the flame to ignite the Doctor's sleeve.

The flame roared, and the Doctor rose up from his seat, knocking over his wine. He screamed and yelled, waving his arm through the air.

"*Dusty!*" his Mom yelled, watching in horror as the Doctor burned. She threw her glass of wine over the Doctor, dousing the flame.

The Doctor stood, soaked in wine, catching his breath.

"I'm *sorry*, it was an *accident*!" Dustin assured them, but his Mom glared at him.

"Dusty, you can't possibly expect-"

"Claudia, it's *okay*," said the Doctor, wiping his hands with a tablecloth. "I think I know what's going on, here..."

Dustin's heart sank. "You do?" he asked.

"Yeah, Dustin, I do... But you've got it all *wrong*..." the Doctor assured him. "I'm not trying to replace your father, and I'm *not* trying to steal your Mother away from you. I'd just like to be your friend, that's all."

There was a pause, and Dustin bowed his head, feeling guilty.

"I'd better go," said Dr. Tamblyn, and Dustin's Mom grabbed his shoulder, leading him to the front door, and giving Dustin a disapproving look on the way.

"I'll *call* you," Dustin heard the Doctor promise his Mom as he stepped out of the front door.

"Okay. *Goodnight*," his Mom replied, before closing the front door, and marching towards Dustin. "*Dusty*... What the hell is the matter with *you*?" she asked, furious.

"I'm sorry, Mom... I just thought... I *dunno* what I thought..." Dustin admitted.

"Well, *congratulations*... I've been looking forward to this night *all* week, and you've *ruined* it," his Mom told him. "I hope you're happy."

Outside, Dustin shook a box of Meow Mix, pacing up and down the backyard.

"Tews?" he called, shaking the box, the biscuits rattling inside. "Tews!" he yelled.

Across the backyard, Dustin heard a loud slam.

Looking over his shoulder, Dustin noticed a tall, shadowy figure standing over the cellar door.

"Shit," Dustin cursed, before dropping the box of Meow Mix.

The shadowy figure climbed down into the cellar, and Dustin skulked across the backyard, approaching the cellar door.

Dustin could hear the figure climbing down the steps, deeper into the cellar.

Dustin gulped nervously, then followed the figure into the cellar.

Reaching the bottom of the steps, Dustin found the shadowy figure across the room, stood over the freezer. Opening the lid, the light from the freezer lit his face.

From out of his jacket pocket, Dr. Tamblyn pulled a tape recorder, and clicked the record button.

In the freezer was the carcass of the Demo-Dog that Dustin and Steve had stuffed into Joyce Byers' fridge freezer, before bringing it here.

Dr. Tamblyn thumbed the record button, and began talking into his tape recorder.

"December 5th, 06:33pm, this is Dr. Richard Tamblyn," he said softly, examining the carcass. "I've found the source of the radiation spike. It appears to be emitting from the carcass of a dog-like animal, which has been preserved in a freezer in the Henderson's cellar." Dr. Tamblyn grabbed the Demo-Dog's jaw, and twisted its neck. "How it ended up here, I'm still uncertain, but these levels of radiation would indicate that the creature originates from the Dark Dimension, and it may be the *key* to communicating with the Shapeshifter," he said into the tape recorder.

"That is, of course," he continued, "providing we find the *girl*."

I hope you all had as much fun reading this chapter as I had writing it! Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

15. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 7)

4th December, 1985

Standing in the reception, Max rang the bell on the front desk, over and over again, until an old man emerged from the back room, a tired look on his face.

"Alright, alright," said the old man, approaching the front desk. He was in his 70s, his grey hair swept back and hidden under a baseball cap. He wore a grey, long-sleeved shirt, tucked into his jeans. He grabbed Max's hand, pulled it away from the bell, and said, "The bell *works*."

Max pulled away from O'Halloran, the motel's caretaker, who asked, "Whaddaya want, kid?"

"I need to get to your pool," Max replied.

"It's seven o'clock," said O'Halloran. "Pool's *closed*."

"But my *ball's* in there," Max complained.

"Your *ball*?"

"Me and my brother were playing football and he accidentally kicked it over the fence," Max explained.

"Kid, do you know how much I get paid an hour?" O'Halloran asked, and Max shook her head. "\$11.50," he answered. "Now, it's 14 out there, and going out in the cold to fish your ball out of my pool, is *far* more than my job's worth."

"Alright, *fine*," said Max, stepping away from the reception. "I'll just *climb* over the fence, and get it *myself*," she assured O'Halloran, walking across the reception. "Of course, it's pretty *dark* out there. I hope I don't *fall*... I could *break* something," she teased.

O'Halloran wore a worried look on his face.

"I noticed your pool doesn't even have a *tarp* over it," said Max.

"That's pretty dangerous... I could *easily* fall in and drown..."

O'Halloran sighed. "Alright, kid," he said. "You've made your point..."

Turning his back on Max, O'Halloran grabbed a key from a hook on the back wall, above which were the words: POOL AREA. Max watched closely.

"I'll get your damn ball," he said, before marching across the room, twirling the key around his finger.

Max watched O'Halloran leave the reception. As soon as the door slammed shut behind him, Max ran to the front desk, and to the back wall, where a row of keys hung on hooks.

Max came across a key on a hook, above which a label read: ROOM 7.

Max picked the key from the hook.

"Did you get it?" asked a voice from across the reception.

Turning around, Max found Lucas, standing in the doorway.

Max smiled, then threw the key to Lucas, who caught it, and said, "C'mon, let's go, before O'Halloran comes back!"

Exiting the reception, Lucas and Max snuck across the motel, and approached the door to Room 7.

Lucas turned to Max, his eyes wide. "You ready?" he asked.

"Just shup up and open it," Max insisted.

Lucas twisted the key in the lock, and swung the door open.

They stepped inside. The room was dark and cold. *So cold.*

A red and blue glow was radiating from a large membrane spread across the back wall of the room. Large tendrils sprouting from deep within the membrane grew across the floor and the walls, spreading across the room, dripping with slime.

"What the hell is *that*?" Max asked, disgusted by the slimy tissue coating the wall.

"A *Gate*," Lucas answered, staring deep into the portal.

Behind them, they head the doorknob twist.

"Someone's coming!" Lucas whispered.

"*Hide!*" Max urged, grabbing Lucas' hand, and pulling him towards the bed, which they slid underneath.

Hiding under the bed, Max and Lucas watched as a man wearing a striped shirt and tie, carrying a jacket over his arm, entered the room, closing the door behind him. The front of his shirt was covered in a red stain, and his sleeve was slightly burnt. He wore a pair of glasses with different colour lenses – one blue, the other red. He had brown, curly hair.

The man stared deeply into the portal, contemplating its scale, the turned to the desk, picking up the telephone. He dialed a number, and waited for the dial tone. A few seconds passed, and somebody answered. "It's me," the man said. "The portal's showing increased activity. It's *growing*. *Fast*."

Beside her, she heard Lucas sneeze.

Max's heart sank.

The man on the phone look over his shoulder. "I'll call you back," he said, before hanging up. He stepped away from the desk, and pulled a revolver out of the back of his trousers.

Max and Lucas exchanged a worried look.

"Who's there?" he yelled, pointing his revolver. "Come on out!"

Climbing out from under the bed, Max and Lucas showed themselves.

"What the *hell*?" said the man, confused, pointing his gun at them both.

Suddenly, the door burst open, bashing into the man, sending him

crashing against the wall, and knocking the gun out of his hand.

The gun fell to the floor, and Max swiftly snatched it, pointing it at the man, who lay on his back.

In the doorway, stood Dustin.

"*Dustin?*" the man asked, confused.

"Ha! *Gotcha!*" yelled Dustin, pointing at the man accusingly. He turned to Max and Lucas, his jaw dropping when he saw them. "Wait, what the hell are *you* guys doing here?"

"I was about to ask *you* the same question," said Lucas.

"This *creep* was snooping around my backyard," explained Dustin, gesturing towards the man. "I think he works for Hawkins Lab."

"Dustin... Let's *talk* about this..." the man begged.

"Shut up!" Max, Lucas and Dustin all yelled in unison.

"Dustin, *look* at this!" said Lucas, pointing at the portal.

"The Gate..." said Dustin, his eyes wide with fear.

Suddenly, Max heard the echo of a familiar voice from deep within the portal.

"*Mom?*" the voice cried. "Mom! It's coming!"

Max turned towards the portal. "Is that..?" she began, her voice trailing off.

"Will!" said Dustin.

"It's like home, but it's so *dark*," Will's voice cried in a panic. "It's so dark and empty. And it's *cold!*"

"It is Will!" said Lucas.

"Will, hold on, we're *coming!*" Dustin yelled into the portal.

"What? We can't go in *there*!" said Lucas.

"Are you *kidding*?" asked Dustin. "*Will's* in there! He needs our *help*!"

"If you go in there..." the man said in a cold, gravely voice. "You *won't* come *back*... That place is *death*!"

"Oh, you're coming *too*, Doc!" Dustin insisted, grabbing the Doctor's arm, and lifting him up.

"What? There's no way!" said the Doctor. "There's no *way*!"

Max pointed her gun at the Doctor, then gestured towards the portal.

"C'mon, let's go," Dustin insisted, leading them towards the portal.

Dustin was the first to climb into the portal, shuffling through the gooey tissue, until it swallowed him whole.

Lucas followed close behind.

The Doctor looked at Max, his eyebrows raised expectantly.

Max pointed the gun at the Doctor, the barrel pointed right at his head. "After you," she insisted.

The Doctor grinned. "Do you even know how to *use* that thing?"

"I know how to *shoot* it," Max answered, and the Doctor chuckled.

The Doctor climbed into the portal, and Max followed close behind.

**Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/
FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

-G

16. Chapter 2: The Telepath (Part 8)

4th December, 1985

The whole car rattled, and Mike shook in his seat, as Mr. Clarke braved the bumpy, country road, driving towards a foggy landscape.

Sat in the backseat, Mike turned to El, who stared out window, her eyes wide. She'd never seen so much green in her whole life.

"El?" uttered Mike, but El didn't turn away from the window. "*Jane*," he called.

Jane turned from the window, and faced Mike.

"About before... I'm *sorry*," he apologized, looking down at his feet. "It's just that... The night Will disappeared, *everything* changed." Mike turned to Jane, staring deeply into her eyes. "But after you closed the Gate, and we danced together at the Snow Ball, I started to think that maybe things could finally go back to the way they *were*." He turned away, looking out the window. "When you first told me about the Shapeshifter, it's not that I didn't believe you... I'm not sure I *wanted* to believe you..." Mike turned to Jane, his eyes wide with urgency. "But, earlier today, I realized something..."

Jane shook her head. "Mike," she said.

"Let me finish," Mike insisted. "I realized that, if Will hadn't disappeared, and all this had never have happened, I never would have met *you*," he explained, before grabbing Jane's hand, and softly clutching it. "I never wanted to hurt you. I'm just *scared* as hell," he admitted. "I'm scared that this is all happening *again*."

"Mike," Jane uttered, her eyes welling up with tears.

"Yeah?"

"It's *okay*... I'm scared *too*."

Mike smiled, and squeezed Jane's hand. She giggled, wiping tears from her eyes.

"Alright, we're here," said Mr. Clarke, pulling up in front of the house. He turned around, facing Mike and Jane. "You two ready?" he asked, smiling warmly.

Mike glanced at Jane, eyebrows furrowed. She nodded.

"Ready," Mike answered confidently.

Beyond a field of crops, the sun began to set, and Mike began to fear that they *weren't* going to be back before curfew.

Mr. Clarke rang the doorbell, and Mike turned to Jane, who stood confidently, her eyes forward.

In front of him, the door swung open with a sharp creak, and a short stocky man stood in the doorway. He wore an olive fleece jacket, and an orange trucker cap, which hid a greying mullet, and he had a horseshoe moustache. He stood in silence, gazing at Mr. Clarke.

"Kenny," Mr. Clarke uttered, grinning.

Suddenly, Kenny's face twisted into a smile. "Scott," he uttered, before wrapping his arms around his brother, and pulling him into an embrace.

By the way his eye's widened, Mr. Clarke clearly hadn't expected such a warm welcome. He patted his brother on the back, before being released from his embrace. "It's good to see you," he said sincerely.

It was then that Kenny's attention shifted to Jane, his smile fading as he gazed at her intensely. "This is the girl?" he asked.

"That's right," said Mr. Clarke, before putting a hand on Mike's shoulder. "And *this* is Mike," he explained, but Kenny's attention was yet to shift from Jane. "He's a friend," he assured Kenny.

Kenny turned to Mr. Clarke, before feigning a warm smile.

"Why don't y'all come inside?" Kenny suggested, holding the door open as all three of them stepped inside, and out of the air which reeked so strongly of manure.

"So, let me get this straight," Kenny began, his eyes narrowed. "You think my son is being *experimented* on by a bunch of white coats, as part of some CIA-sanctioned *mind control* program?"

"We're saying it's *possible*," said Mr. Clarke, lent forward in his seat. "We're saying there's a *chance* that Malcom could still be alive."

Kenny rose from his seat, before pacing up and down the lounge. He removed his hat, and ran his fingers through his hair.

Sitting on the couch across from him, Mike fidgeted nervously, watching Kenny pace up and down.

Kenny paused, then mumbled, "And people said *I* was paranoid", before chuckling. "Human experiments... Hypnosis.. *Mind control*!?" he said skeptically. "I mean, this can't all be for *real*?"

"It's *real*," said Mike assertively, and Kenny turned to him, eyebrows furrowed doubtfully. "And it's been going on for *years* now."

"And the people responsible," Kenny began, "you said they're all *gone* now."

Mike turned to Jane, who wore a concerned look. Mike turned back to Kenny, then said, "Yeah, they're *gone*, which means your son is out there *somewhere*." Mike grabbed Jane's hand. "And Jane can *find* him," he said, before turning to Jane, "*Right*?"

Jane looked up at Kenny. "If he's *alive*, I'll find him," she said confidently.

Kenny was conflicted, he returned to pacing up and down the lounge, before shaking his head and grunting. "Even if all of this is true, what makes you think my *boy* is caught up in it?" he asked.

"Like Mike said, this has been going on for *years*," Mr. Clarke echoed. "Not to mention..." he began, his voice trailing off. He sighed, then said, "We never *did* find a body."

"That's *it*?" asked Kenny, his back turned. "You never *saw* my boy? You haven't *spoken* to him?"

"No," Jane answered, her voice shaking nervously.

"And yet, you think that Dr. Brenner and the rest of those *brainiacs* at Hawkins Lab are somehow *responsible* for what happened to him?" said Kenny, his patience wearing thin.

Jane stuttered, and Mike turned to her. She was stunned, her eyes wide. "I never mentioned Dr. Brenner," she assured him.

Mike's heart sank, and suddenly, he had a very *bad* feeling about being in that house.

Kenny turned to them, a look of sorrow on his face. "I'm *sorry*," he said. "I didn't have any other choice," he assured them.

Mike had been right all along, and it never felt so bad.

"Jane!" he yelled. She turned to him, her eyes wide with fear.

Behind them, there was a loud crash as the window shattered. Broken glass was cast over their shoulders, and a canister landed in the middle of the lounge.

Mr. Clarke rose from his seat. "Kenny!" he yelled. "What the *heck* is going on?"

The canister began to emit smoke, which filled the room until Mike couldn't even see his own hand in front of his face.

"Jane!" Mike yelled, searching for Jane in the mist. He found her hand and, clutching it tight, dragged her through the mist, and to the hallway.

"No!" Kenny yelled. "Come back!"

Mike turned to Jane, putting his hands on her shoulders. "We've gotta go!" he said, before a loud crash drew his attention to the front door, where a mob of suited men marched down the hallway, approaching Mike and Jane with weapons drawn.

Jane gently pushed Mike aside, stepping in front of him, and confronting the agents.

Jane tilted her head, staring intensely at the agents, and raised her hand.

"Eleven!" a voice cried desperately.

Recognizing the voice, Jane lowered her hand.

From out of the mob, an *older*, suited man emerged, a large scar spread across his wrinkled face.

"*Papa*," Jane uttered, her gaze fixed on the man, who knelt before her.

"Yes, Eleven," said Dr. Brenner, "it's *me*."

Mike turned to Jane, whose eyes welled with tears.

"And I'm here to take you *home*," said Dr. Brenner.

That the end of Chapter 2: The Telepath; I hope you all enjoyed it! I'll be taking a short break, but will return next week with the beginning of Chapter 3: Tick-Tock, in which Hopper learns the truth about Five, while Eleven is reunited with an old foe. Meanwhile, Dustin, Lucas, Max and Dr. Tamblyn make a shocking discovery about the nature of the Upside Down.

In the meantime, you can always go back and re-read Chapters 1 and 2, as there are a few plot points from these chapters that will begin to pay off in Chapter 3.

Either way, be sure to leave a REVIEW, and don't forget to FOLLOW/FAVORITE this story!

See you next week!

-G

17. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 1)

4th December, 1985

Ash-like spores floated in the air, and ropy, overgrown tendrils spread across Downtown Hawkins.

Dustin led them through the dark, cold fog, lighting their path with a flashlight.

They had emerged from the other side of the portal, in Room 7 at the Hive.

But in the Upside Down, *everything* was different.

The Hive was a ruin, and large, root-like tendrils had grown over the rubble, from out of which Dustin, Lucas, Max and Dr. Tamblyn had climbed, following the echo of Will's voice.

They hadn't heard Will's voice since.

"Will!" Lucas yelled, at Dustin's side. "Will, where *are* you!?"

"Are you *crazy*?" asked Dustin before grabbing Lucas' arm, silencing him. "Keep your voice down!"

Lucas pulled away, frustrated, and reminded Dustin, "*You're* the one whose idea it was to come here in the first place!"

"Look, I wanna find Will," Dustin explained, his voice hushed, "but I wanna find him *alive*."

"Then why didn't we go to Hopper?" Lucas asked desperately.

Dustin scoffed. "Because, Hopper doesn't understand this place like *I* do," he explained.

Lucas shook his head and said, "Look, Dustin, I don't know what you *think* you know, but-"

"I know that, if you don't keep your voice down, you're gonna turn us

into Demo-dog bait," Dustin snapped.

Lucas sighed. "You've *gotta* stop calling them that," he said.

"I don't see *you* coming up with anything better," Dustin replied. "Besides, the Demo-Dogs are just the beginning," he said. "We have no idea what else the Vale of Shadows-

"Dustin, *stop*," said Lucas, grabbing Dustin's shoulder, and pulling him to one side. "This isn't a game, *alright*? This place is dangerous... Like, really, *really* dangerous. We could all *die* here, if we're not careful."

Dustin's eyes narrowed, his frustration with Lucas growing. "Lucas, if you're so scared, why don't you and your girlfriend just go home?" Dustin asked, before turning his back on Lucas, and carrying on walking down the road, and towards the town center.

Looking over his shoulder, Lucas saw Max walking beside Dr. Tamblyn, pointing a revolver at his belly.

"I can't believe I'm being threatened by a twelve year-old," Dr. Tamblyn mumbled.

"I'm *fifteen*," Max snapped.

Lucas chased Dustin, rejoining his side. "What's the story with the guy in the lab coat?" asked Lucas.

"He's dating my Mom," said Dustin, "and I think he works for Hawkins Lab."

"What makes you think *that*?" asked Lucas.

"Just a hunch," Dustin assured him, his eyes wandering to the ground.

"*Dustin*," said Lucas with a stern face, having seen through his lie. "What happened?"

Dustin shuffled nervously. "He broke into my cellar and found the dead Demo-Dog I stuffed into my freezer," he burst out, suddenly.

"What the *hell*?" said Lucas. Stunned, he stopped in his tracks.

"Dustin, *why* were you hiding a dead Demo-Dog in your freezer?"

"Because, I thought it was *cool*, okay?" Dustin replied, confronting Lucas. "Besides, that's not important," he assured him. "What's important, is that I overheard Dr. Tamblyn talk to somebody *else*."

"Somebody else?" Lucas echoed. "*Who*?"

"I dunno, Dustin admitted, "but whoever they were, I think they were looking for Jane."

Lucas' eyes widened, he turned away.

"What is it?" Dustin asked.

"Her and Mike were supposed to meet me at the Hive earlier," he explained. "They never showed."

From behind them, Dr. Tamblyn and Max approached.

"What's the hold up?" asked Max, still pointing a revolver at the Doctor.

"What did you *do* to her?" asked Lucas, pointing a finger at Dr. Tamblyn accusingly.

"*Who*?" Dr. Tamblyn asked, stunned.

"*Jane*," said Lucas, "our friend."

Dr. Tamblyn smirked. "Ah," he said. "*Her*."

"Tell us!" Max yelled, jabbing the revolver at his belly.

Dr. Tamblyn groaned. "I'll tell you," he promised. "But first, I want you to stop waving that gun around like a damn *toy*."

Max turned to Lucas, who nodded, and she lowered the gun.

Dr. Tamblyn sighed, and his face twisted into a smile. "*There*," he said, before turning to Max. "Now, was that so hard?" he asked her, his eyebrows furrowed.

"Start talking," said Lucas, coldly.

"A few weeks ago," Dr. Tamblyn began, "we discovered a *massive* radiation spike in Hawkins, originating from a room at the Hive motel, where we discovered a portal to the Dark Dimension had been opened."

"*Dark Dimension?*" Dustin echoed, his eyes narrowed in confusion.

"You got a *better* name for this place?" the Doctor asked him.

"Well, *actually*-"

"Shut up," Lucas urged, nudging Dustin.

"Yes, well, it appears that, after this portal was opened, something got *out*," Dr. Tamblyn revealed.

"The Shapeshifter," said Dustin, before sharing a worried look with Lucas.

"That's *right*," said Dr. Tamblyn. "And Dr. Brenner's pretty sure that your friend, *Jane*, is the *only* person who can find it."

"Dr. Brenner," Lucas echoed, shaken by the mention of the name. "But, he's supposed to be *dead*."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Dr. Tamblyn, smiling cruelly.

Behind him, Dustin hear a loud roar, which echoed through the street.

Turning around, he saw a large, dog-like creature perched on the roof of a school bus. It roared again, it's face opening up like flower petals.

"Shit," Dustin uttered.

"*Demo-Dogs*," said Lucas.

"*Demo-what?*" yelled Dr. Tamblyn.

Down the street, they heard the clinking of bottles, as another Demo-

Dog appeared from out of an alleyway, knocking over a pile of trash cans along the way.

Ahead of them, the Demo-Dog leapt from the school bus, and onto the roof of a sedan, its windows smashing under the weight of the beast.

Max shuffled between Dustin and Lucas, before taking aim, and firing at the Demo-Dog.

The shot missed, hitting and smashing one of the windows of the school bus. The creature roared in frustration.

Max fired again, and her shot was a direct hit, piercing the creature thick skin, and knocking it from the roof of the sedan, where it hit the ground with a thud.

"Nice shot!" said Dr. Tamblyn.

Behind them, the second Demo-Dog crept towards them.

Max went to open fire on the pack, but her revolver only clicked in response.

"I'm out of ammo!" Max yelled.

"What are we gonna do *now*?" Lucas cried.

Suddenly, a figure leapt in front of them, standing between them and the Demo-Dog.

Over his shoulders, the man carried a large tank of fuel, which was connected through a hose to the shaft he carried in his hands, the nozzle pointed at the Demo-Dog.

Fire began to pour from out of the nozzle, torching the Demo-Dog, who cried and screeched as they burned to a crisp.

Behind them, a Demo-Dog was perched atop the roof of a sedan, and roared.

The Demo-Dog leapt towards them, before a storm of bullets rained

down on it. Its corpse landed with a thud mere inches in front of them.

From out of the fog, a woman emerged, holding a rifle over her shoulder, and a gas mask on her head.

The woman pointed, and yelled, "Look out!"

Dustin spun around, and a Demo-Dog leapt towards him.

The Demo-Dog crashed into him, and wrestled him to the ground.

Dustin was scared stiff. The Demo-Dog growled, its feet keeping him pressed to the ground as its mouth began to spread open, salivating all over Dustin's face.

The Demo-Dog roared, showing off its razor-sharp teeth.

Suddenly, Dustin heard a loud pop.

In a bloody explosion, the Demo-Dog had seemingly burst, leaving Dustin covered in flesh and blood.

From out of the fog, an old man emerged. He had grey hair, hidden beneath a black beanie, and wore a torn and dirtied trench coat, and a pair of camo pants. He also wore a gas mask over his face.

Terrified, Dustin shuffled away, but as he approached the old man removed his gas mask, revealing his tired, wrinkled face, and a warm smile.

"It's okay, Dustin," he assured him. "We're here to help."

"How do you know my name?" Dustin asked, catching his breath.

"I know *all* about you, Dustin," the old man explained, "and your *friends*, too. We've been waiting for you for a *long* time."

"Who *are* you?" Dustin asked.

The old man smiled. "We're the resistance," he said.

I hope you all enjoyed the start of Chapter 3: Tick-Tock. Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

18. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 2)

Chapter Three: Tick-Tock

4th December, 1985

"You'll never find him," Alvin hissed from the backseat of the Chevy K5 Blazer, where he wriggled in his handcuffs.

Hopper twisted in his seat, glaring at Alvin over his shoulder. "Yeah?" he asked.

"He's *special*," Alvin uttered.

"I can *see* that," said Hopper, looking out of his window at the wrecked trailer, and the two bicycles parked outside on the lawn. "The *boys*," he said, glaring at Alvin through the rear-view mirror. "Where did they *go*?"

"How am *I* supposed to know?" said Alvin, his eyebrows raised. "Five's never *had* friends before... But, he seems to trust *Will*."

"Five," Hopper echoed. "Where'd that kid come from?" he asked.

Alvin sighed, wriggling uncomfortably. "Hawkins Lab," he answered. "I found him on my way back from fishing, just up the Eno river. There he was, dressed in nothing but a hospital gown, and his *head* was shaved. He told me that the people that had done this to him, if they ever found me, they'd *kill* me... And, you know what?"

"What?" Hopper uttered, his eyebrows furrowed.

"I *believed* him," said Alvin.

"When did you find out that he was...*special*?" Hopper asked.

"*That* was a coupla years later," Alvin explained. "I took him out fishing one afternoon. I was reeling in this fish, when it burst out of the river, and landed a couple of inches in front of my feet." Alvin shook his head and grinned as he remembered that day. "He told me what had happened, and made me *promise* not to tell *anyone* the

truth."

Hopper peered over his shoulder. "*Did* you?" he asked.

"No," Alvin promised, "but on *one* condition."

Hopper turned away, his fists curling. "You *used* him," he uttered.

"We had a good thing goin' too, until *you* and your *son* came along," Alvin complained. "I *know* Schumacher was close to paying up. I could *feel* it." Suddenly, Alvin began to chuckle. "He made a *big* mistake visiting Hawkins Middle School," he joked. "All Five needed to do was be in the same *room* as that fraud, and then he found out *all* about his little *scheme*," Alvin explained.

"Scheme," Hopper echoed. "*What* scheme?"

Alvin smiled devilishly, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. "Whaddaya think had the Mayor so *rattled*?" he asked, giggling. "His mistress was just *one* of his secrets... I'm talkin' health fraud, money laundering-"

"Do you have any *proof* of all of this?" Hopper asked, his eyes wide with desperation.

Alvin shook his head. "Just the boy," he said.

Hopper sighed, then gripped the steering wheel confidently. "Then I'm taking you to the Mayor *myself*," he declared, "and we're gonna get to the bottom of this."

Hopper's radio crackled. "Hey, Chief," said a familiar voice, "you copy?"

Hopper lifted the radio to his mouth. "Yeah, Cal, I copy," he said. "What's going on?"

"Mrs. Henderson had her *cellar* broken into," Cal lahan explained. "And she can't find her *boy*."

Hopper's heart sank. *Dustin*, he thought, before looking out the window, and at the two bicycles laid across the lawn.

He clutched the radio.

"Cal, I want you to contact Mike Wheeler, and Lucas Sinclair, and find out where *Dustin* is," he instructed. "*Then*, I want you to talk to Joyce, and tell her to find Will." Hopper paused. "She'll *know* where he is," he said.

In Castle Byers, Five sat with his arms wrapped around his knees, nervously rocking back and forth.

"It's alright," Will reassured him. "*Nobody* knows we're here."

"You're *sure*?" asked Five, his eyes wide with fear.

"Only the people I trust the most in the *world* know about this place," Will assured him, lying across his quilt, and staring curiously at Five, who continued to rock nervously. "Are you okay?"

"Sure," said Five, distracted. He turned to Will, his eyebrows furrowed. "*Why*? Because of *earlier*?"

"I thought you might be upset about your Dad-"

"He's not my Dad," said Five, interrupting.

"What?"

"I said he's *not* my Dad!" Five yelled, sitting still. "He's a *liar*, and he turned me into a *monster*," he cried, his eyes welling, and his voice breaking. "All I've *ever* wanted is to be *normal*," he explained.

Will bowed his head. "Well," he began, "that's... *never* gonna happen."

Five turned to Will, hot tears rolling down his cheeks. "*What*?" he uttered, sniffing.

"You're *not* normal," Will assured him, "and you *never* will be."

Five rose to his feet, a look of disgust on his face. "What the *hell*, Byers?"

"It's *okay*," said Will calmly, before rising to his feet. "Being normal is *boring*," he assured him. "You're so much *more*... You're *weird*... Like *me*."

Five frowned. "Why would I wanna be *weird*?" he asked, confused.

"Being weird is the *best*," Will enthused. "It means that you can *say* or *do* whatever you want, no matter what anybody else thinks."

Five began to smile. "You *really* think I'm weird?" he asked, wiping away his tears.

"*Yeah*," said Will, passionately. "You're also *funny*, and *kind*, and *smart*..." he said, before reaching out to clutch Five's hand. "Which is why I *like* you."

Five heard a shuffle, and a figure reached into the makeshift fort. "Will?" a woman's voice asked, before drawing back the curtain, and peering inside.

Will let go of Five's hand. "Mom," he said, as Joyce Byers stepped into the fort.

"Will," she uttered, her eyes wide. "What's going *on*?" she asked.

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

19. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 3)

4th December, 1985

Standing at the front desk, Nancy rang the bell.

Next to her, Steve stood awkwardly, his hands in his pockets.

Nancy sighed. "I'm sorry about *before*," she said.

"*Before*?" Steve echoed.

"Me and Jonathan almost got *killed* for knowing what we know," she reminded him, before turning to Steve. "I didn't wanna put you in danger," she said, looking up at Steve.

"It's okay," Steve assured her, smiling faintly. "I know you didn't want me to butt in on you and your boyfriend's *big* story," he said, before ringing the bell.

Nancy scoffed. "*Steve*," she complained, but Steve ignored her. "He's *actually* a good guy, once you get to know him," she assured Steve, before ringing the bell.

"Okay, *fine*," Steve snapped. "Does that mean I have to *like* him?" he asked, before ringing the bell again.

Nancy stood in silence.

Steve sighed.

"Okay, so, *what's* the plan here?" Nancy asked, breaking the silence.

"*What?* I thought *you* were the one with the plan?" said Steve, his eyebrows furrowed with confusion.

"*Me?*" said Nancy, her eyes wide.

A door slammed, and both their necks turned as an old man entered the reception, clutching a fishing net, which was dripping wet. "There ain't no ball in that swimming pool, Miss- Oh. *Sorry*," he said,

confused. "You, uh... Need a *room*?" he asked, approaching them.

"Actually, we're here to visit a man named Dr. Tamblyn," Nancy explained.

The caretaker stood before them, his eyes narrowing with suspicion. "Ain't no one staying here by that name," he assured them.

"Then whose is that Audi 5000S outside?" Steve asked, stepping towards the caretaker. "The 83?"

The caretaker gulped, his eyes wide with fear. "You kids had better leave," he encouraged.

Suddenly, Jonathan burst into the reception. "Nancy! I found something!" he yelled urgently.

They approached Room 7.

Outside, a bicycle with an unfinished paint job lay across the ground.

"It's *Dustin's*," said Jonathan.

"What the hell is *he* doing here?" asked Nancy, at Jonathan's side.

Steve approached the door to Room 7, noticing thick, wet goo oozing from the other side of the door. He turned to O'Halloran, and nudged him. "Open it up, will ya?" he yelled.

O'Halloran pulled a set of keys out of his pocket, shaking nervously as he picked out the key to Room 7, slipped it into the lock, and unlocked the door.

The door to Room 7 swung open, revealing its dark, cold interior.

A large membrane was spread across the back wall of the room, a red and blue glow radiating from within it. Large tendrils grew across the walls, sprouting from deep within the portal, and spread across the room, dripping with slime.

"What the *hell*?" O'Halloran uttered, his jaw hanging open as he

stared into the portal.

"What is *this*?" Steve yelled, staring at the portal in horror.

"He told me that he was trying to save the *world*," O'Halloran uttered.
"That I was serving my *country*."

Nancy turned to O'Halloran. "*Who? Who* told you?" she asked.

"Brenner," O'Halloran said. "Dr. Martin Brenner."

"*Brenner*?" Jonathan echoed.

"Where is he?" Nancy asked desperately.

"Fort Hagen," O'Halloran revealed. "The abandoned military outpost."

"I know it," said Steve. "It's by Lake Jordan."

Nancy and Jonathan shared a concerned look, then nodded, and followed Steve out of Room 7.

"What the *hell* do you think you're *doing*?" O'Halloran yelled after them.

Nancy turned to the caretaker. "Saving the world," she answered, smiling.

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

20. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 4)

4th December, 1986

Sitting in the interrogation room, the flickering light above her began to irritate Jane.

The room was pitch-black, before being filled with fluorescent light, which then failed, and the room returned to darkness.

This pattern repeated, and Jane's fists curled in anger. She gazed up at the light, her eyes narrowing as she focused her mind.

Electricity crackled and fizzed. The fluorescent light activated, and remained so.

Jane sighed. Across the room, she heard the screeching of metal as the door to the small, box-like room swung open.

Papa stepped into the room, a large, red scar spread diagonally across his tired face.

He walked towards her, his eyes wide and focused on Jane.

Taking a seat across the table from her, Papa smiled warmly. "*Eleven*," he said gently. "I can't tell you how *glad* I am to see you."

"That's *not* my name," Jane snapped. "My name is *Jane*."

"*Jane*," he echoes, chuckling. "That's the name your *Mother* gave you. But it's not the name that *I* gave you," he reminded her, before glancing at her wrist, his eyes narrowing.

Papa snatched her wrist, before pulling up her sleeve, revealing her tattoo. Revealing her *name*. 011.

"You still have it," he said, his face twisting into a smile. Jane pulled away from Papa.

He gazed at her, his eyes wide. "Did you know, that I was the *first* person to hold you in their arms?"

Jane shook her head.

"I *loved* your Mother, Eleven, and it broke my heart to see what happened to her," he assured her.

"What happened to Mama was *your* fault," Jane reminded him. "You *abducted* me... *Experimented* on me..."

"One day, you will come to understand my actions, and you may even *thank* me," Papa promised her.

"You're a *liar*," Jane snarled.

"I'm *many* things, Eleven, but I am *not* a liar," he assured her. "I respect your Mother too much to lie to you."

Jane's eye narrowed, refusing to believe his lies.

Papa sighed. He rose to his feet, walking across the room. He gazed at his reflection in the two-way mirror. "I've made *many* mistakes over the years, Eleven," he admitted. "And I've spent *a lot* of time trying to rectify those mistakes." Dr. Brenner turned to her, a somber look across his face. "A couple of weeks ago, a portal to another dimension was opened in Hawkins, and *something* got out."

Jane shuddered. "The *Shapeshifter*..." she uttered.

Papa's eye narrowed, his curiosity intensifying. "You've *seen* it..."

Jane nodded, and Papa stepped towards her.

"Which is exactly why we need your help..." he said, taking a seat across from her. "This creature represents an unparalleled threat to our country – the whole *world*, even," he explained, before leaning forward. "And I believe only *you* can stop it."

Jane shook her head, her heart racing. "I need to get back to *Hawkins*," she assured him. "I need to *warn* my friends!" she yelled, before rising from her seat.

Jane turned her back on Papa, who rose from his seat behind her.

"They can't *help* you, Eleven," Papa assured her. "They don't *understand* you like *I* do."

"Hopper understands me," she yelled angrily, turning to Papa.

"That *oaf*?" he asked, chuckling.

"And he *protects* me, and he *cares* about me, and he *doesn't* lie," Jane assured him, pointing accusingly at Papa.

"You don't think so?" asked Papa, smiling cruelly.

"What are you talking about?" asked Jane, her voice shaking nervously.

"Hawkins Middle School. Two years ago," uttered Papa.

Jane's eyebrows pulled together, and she gazed at Papa in confusion.

"How do you think we *knew* to look for you there?" asked Papa.

Jane's heart sank. "*No*," she uttered as she shook.

"I'm afraid so," Papa said gently, walking towards her. "Hopper sold you out."

Jane broke into tears, shaking nervously, her breathing rattled.

Papa approached her, and pulled Jane into a warm embrace, her forehead at his chest.

"It's *okay*," he promised her warmly. "*I'm* going to protect you now."

Mike paced up and down the sealed room, his footsteps slapping the cement floor.

Suddenly, he heard the shifting of metal, and the door swung open.

Jane stepped into the room, her eyes welling with tears.

"*Jane*," Mike uttered.

Jane approached Mike. He wrapped his arms around her, and said, "Are you *okay*?"

"It's *Papa*," she said, sniffing, before Mike released her from the warm embrace.

"You *spoke* to him?" Mike asked, clutching her shoulders. "What did he *say*?"

"He wants me to *help* him," Jane explained.

"*Help* him?" Mike echoed, before scoffing. "Yeah, *right*," he said, grinning. His smile faded, and he leaned in closer to Jane. "*Listen*, Jane, I only spotted half a dozen guards on *this* level," he explained, his voice hushing to a whisper. "We could sneak outta here *easily*!"

"*Mike*..." Jane uttered, shaking her head dismissively.

"We *just* need to steal a keycard from one of the guards, and we can take the elevator-"

"*Mike*!" Jane yelled, interrupting him. She stepped away from Mike, his hands falling from her shoulders.

"*What*?" he asked, innocently.

"I'm *going* to help him," Jane explained, a somber look across her face. "I *have* to."

Mike was confused, his head tilted as she approached Jane. "But, *Jane*-"

"*Stop* calling me that!" she yelled, stunning Mike. "I mean..." Jane's voice trailed off. She gazed at Mike, her eyes wide with desperation. "*Listen, Mike*, the Shapeshifter is *real*, and Papa can help us *stop* it," she assured him.

"You *really* trust him?" Mike asked.

Jane shrugged. "I don't know," she admitted, and the two shared a long silence.

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

21. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 5)

4th December, 1985

Kenny heard the screeching of metal as the door to the interrogation room swung open, and a set of footsteps approached.

"Where are we?" Kenny yelled angrily.

"Fort Hagen," a gentle voice answered, and Dr. Brenner stepped out of the shadows. "Abandoned military outpost, by Lake Jordan. *Off the records.*"

Dr. Brenner took a seat opposite Kenny, who leaned forward, his eyes narrowing.

"Where's my *boy*?" Kenny asked.

Dr. Brenner sighed. "*Gone*," he admitted.

"What'd you say?" Kenny snapped.

"Kenny, it is true that, in the Summer of '79, we *abducted* your son from his home," Dr. Brenner admitted in a calm voice. "Your son played a *key* role in a very *special* program called Project MK Ultra."

"Don't talk down me, Doc," said Kenny. "I know *all* about your little science experiments."

"Then you'll know just how *special* your son *was*," said Dr. Brenner.

Lenny's heat sank. "*Was*?" he echoed.

"Four years later, your son *escaped* Hawkins Lab," Dr. Brenner explained. "We tried our best to find him, but... It's *unlikely* he survived in the woods."

"Was there a *body*?" Kenny asked.

Dr. Brenner tilted his head in confusion. "*What*?"

"You heard me," said Kenny, firmly.

"Mr. Clarke, we're all very *grateful* for your help, but it's time-"

Suddenly, Kenny rose to his feet, pointing accusingly at Dr. Brenner. "This is *bullshit*," he yelled. "*You are bullshit!*"

Across the table, Dr. Brenner rose to his feet, reaching out with hand to try to calm Kenny. "Mr. Clarke-"

"Stop calling me *that*," said Kenny. "Only my brother..." His voice trailed off, and he looked around him, confused. "Where *is* my brother?" he asked.

"*Tomorrow*, Kenny, your brother is going to receive a phone call, and a voice is going to tell him that, should he ever speak a word of what happened *today*, his *fiancée*, *Jen*, will be captured, tortured, and eventually *killed*," Dr. Brenner explained in a somber tone.

"Is that *true*?" Kenny asked, his eyes narrow with suspicion.

"What do you *think*?" asked Dr. Brenner, sincerely.

"I think you're a liar, Doc," said Kenny, angrily. "A bald-faced *liar*."

"Kenny, *please*-"

"I want *out* of this place, Doc," said Kenny, pacing up and down the interrogation room. "There's nothing for me *here*."

"How can I trust you?" asked Dr. Brenner.

"You told me that my son is dead, Doc," Kenny reminded him. "If that's *true*, then I have *nothing* to gain by selling you down the river."

As Kenny approached the door, Dr. Brenner said, "I *am* sorry about your son, Kenny. He was a *good* kid."

Kenny paused, and turned to Dr. Brenner, his eyes welling. "Fuck you, Doc," he uttered, before slamming the door behind him.

Kenny was led down the corridor by a suited man, who wore an earpiece, and had a Smith and Wesson on his hip.

"The kids," Kenny uttered. "What's gonna happen to *them*?"

The guard was silent, and stared blankly ahead.

"You know," Kenny began, "I'd sure appreciate it if you folks could take me *home* now."

The guard's hand hovered over his revolver, and Kenny's heart began to race.

"Well, *shit*," Kenny cursed. "I'd sure hoped things wouldn't have to go this way," he said before lunging towards the guard, crashing into him and slamming him against the wall, where the guard dropped his revolver.

The guard was winded. Kenny grabbed his neck, pinning him against the wall, then threw a clenched fist into his face, socking him in the jaw, and knocking him to the ground, where the guard lay motionless.

Catching his breath, Kenny grabbed the revolver, then picked a keycard from the guard's pocket.

Kenny jogged down the hallway, clutching the revolver, until he came to the sealed door at the end of the corridor. He inserted the keycard into the lock, which then beeped, and Kenny heard the shifting of metal, before the door swung open.

Inside the small, box-like room, stood two teenagers.

"*You*," the boy with black, mop-like hair yelled, staring at Kenny hatefully.

"We gotta go," said Kenny, standing in the doorway, and clutching the revolver.

"We *can't*," said the girl. *Jane*.

"Jane!" the boy yelled, before sharing a conflicted look with Jane.

"Dammit, kids, stop screwin' around," Kenny snapped. "We gotta go, and we gotta go *now*!"

"*Mike...*" Jane uttered, gazing at the boy with wide, sad eyes.

"This is our *only* chance," the boy assured her.

Reluctantly, Jane nodded. "How do we get outta here?" she asked.

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

22. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 6)

4th December, 1985

Approaching the military outpost, Jonathan pulled up in his Ford LTD by a metal sign that read: RESTRICTED AREA. AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

"Is this *it*?" asked Nancy, sitting in the passenger seat.

"This is *it*," Steve said confidently, from the backseat.

Most of the grounds were coated in shadow, but across the outpost, Jonathan noticed a hangar, and a spotlight wandering lazily atop it.

"What do we do *now*?" asked Jonathan.

"Why don't we try *knocking*?" Steve joked.

Nancy and Jonathan glanced at each other.

Nancy nodded.

Jonathan nodded, then put his foot on the accelerator, and drove towards the hangar.

"Woah," Steve uttered, leaning forward from the backseat. "*Hey*, I was just kiddin' around!"

Jonathan continued to drive down the dirt road.

"*Guys*?" Steve yelled.

"This better not be another *trap*," said Mike, as Kenny led them across the hangar.

Mike looked over his shoulder. Behind him, Jane gazed from one corner of the hangar to the other, taking in the vast, open space.

Noticing Kenny, two agents approached them, guns at their waists.

"Where do you think you're *goin'*?" the taller of the two agents asked. He was a bald man with a chiseled jaw. He crossed his arms, a walkie-talkie on his hip.

"Dr. Brenner asked me to take these kids *home*," Kenny assured him, smiling confidently as he lied through his teeth.

The agent shared a confused look with his partner, a short, stocky man with a buzzed haircut. He turned to Kenny, and said, "First *I've* heard of it."

Kenny sighed. "Well, John Wayne, I don't know what to tell ya," he said. "That's what the Doc said."

The agent turned to his partner again, an eyebrow raised in suspicion. "I'm gonna have to call this in," he said, before reaching for his walkie-talkie.

Kenny bit his lip, then grabbed the agent by the collar of his shirt, yanked him towards him, and socked him across the jaw, knocking him to the ground.

Behind him, his partner had already drawn the revolver from his waist, pointing it at Kenny.

Kenny stared down the barrel. His heart sank.

Suddenly, a force yanked at the agent's heel, sending him tumbling to the floor, before he was lifted up into the air, where he dangled above them upside down.

Behind them, Jane was focused on the agent, blood dripping from her nose.

Jane turned to Kenny, who nodded.

The agent landed on the floor with a thud.

Suddenly, an alarm blared, and sirens flashed in every corner of the hangar.

"We gotta run," Kenny yelled over the deafening sirens.

They bolted across the hangar.

Gears began to shift, and Kenny noticed the hangar doors lowering.

"Move your asses," Kenny yelled, his movement quickening to a sprint.

The hangar doors were almost halfway closed.

"*Shit!*" Kenny yelled, his heart racing as he watched the foggy landscape beyond begin to disappear.

Gears shifted, and Kenny heard the screeching of metal, as the hangar doors fell still.

"Jane!" Kenny heard Mike yell.

Behind him, Jane had come to a halt. She reached out towards the hangar doors, her eyes narrowed.

Jane turned to Mike. "Go," she uttered.

Mike shook his head. "No," he said. "Not without *you!*"

"Go!" Jane yelled, blood trickling from her nose.

Kenny grabbed Mike's arm. "C'mon, kid," he yelled, as agents began to pour into the hangar. "They're *coming!*"

Kenny dragged Mike towards the hangar doors, which screeched as they wrestled with Jane. In his arms, Mike scrambled, yelling after Jane.

From out of the mob of agents, Dr. Brenner emerged. "Jane!" he yelled.

Jane turned to Dr. Brenner, her eyes wide with fear.

The hangar doors slid closed.

Dragging Mike along with him, Kenny leapt through the space between the hangar doors, landing with a crash in the grass.

Mike groaned as he picked himself up, and yelled, "Jane!"

Kenny rose to his feet, then grabbed Mike's shoulder. "Kid," he said, as a car's tires screeched behind him. "I'm *sorry*, but we have to get out of here, *now*!"

"*Mike!*" a girl's voice cried from inside the Ford LTV, which had pulled up behind them.

"*Nancy?*" said Mike, turning to face the car, the headlights shining on his face.

Kenny dragged Mike to the rear of the car, before swinging the door open. "Get in," he urged Mike, before stuffing him into the backseat.

Kenny climbed inside, and as he shut the door, the boy who was driving began to accelerate.

As they sped towards the hangar, and the car began to reverse, Kenny noticed Dr. Brenner, Jane, and a garrison of agents standing in the doorway.

Mike, climbing over Kenny, placed a hand on the window, gazing longingly at Jane, who wore a devastated look.

Jane turned her back on them, and Kenny met eyes with Dr. Brenner, who only watched as they raced down the air strip, leaving Fort Hagen, Dr. Brenner, his agents, and Jane behind.

"What the hell *happened* back there?" Steve yelled from across the car. "Who the hell are *you*?" he asked, gesturing towards Kenny, who sat uncomfortably between Steve and Mike.

"His name's Kenny Clarke," Nancy recalled from the passenger seat. "His son was one of Project MKUltra's human subjects."

"You," Kenny uttered, staring at Nancy in disbelief. "You're that *reporter!*" he yelled, pointing at Nancy.

"Jonathan, are they *tailing* us?" Steve asked, urgently.

"No," said Jonathan, his eyes on the dirt road ahead of them. He checked the wing mirror, then said, "I don't *think* so."

Nancy turned to face Kenny, an angry expression across her face. "Are you *working* with these people?"

"What? *No!*" Kenny denied. "Of *course* not!" he yelled, angrily. "They took my *boy*."

Nancy turned to Mike, a concerned look on her face. "*Mike*," she uttered. "What *happened*? "Where's *Dustin*?" she asked.

Mike hadn't uttered a word. He only watched as Fort Hagen shrunk in the rear-view mirror.

"*Mike!*" Nancy yelled, startling Mike.

"I don't *know*," Mike explained. "I wasn't with *Dustin*. It was just *me* and *Jane*," he said.

Nancy shook her head, confused. "Then, where's *Jane*?" she asked.

Mike's heart sank. He went back to looking at the reflection in the rear-view mirror.

All he could see was darkness.

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

23. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 7)

4th December, 1985

"Where are we *going*?" Dustin yelled, his tired legs beginning to ache.

"We're going *home*," said Bogart, leading them down Randolph Lane, and through the omnipresent fog.

Bogart was a homeless man, whom Dustin had recognized from the streets of Hawkins. His presence here in the Upside Down, however, had left Dustin baffled.

Down the lane, Dustin heard the echo of a dog-like growl, and their party came to an immediate halt.

"Boss," said the massive black man to Dustin's left. "That sounds like *Demo-Dogs*."

Dustin turned to Lucas, a wide, toothy grin spread across his face. "Ya *see*?" he said. "Not such a dumb name *now*, is it?"

Lucas rolled his eyes.

To Lucas' right, the tall, freckle-faced, blonde woman cocked her rifle. "We can take 'em," she assured Bogart.

"I don't doubt that, Andrea," said Bogart, with a smile. "But gunfire will only draw *more* of them," he explained, before approaching the side of the road. "Here," he uttered, pointing towards an opening in the trees. "We'll cut through the forest instead."

"*Great*," said Dr. Tamblyn, from behind. "I've been *dying* to set foot in the dark, creepy woods," he said sarcastically. "I hear they're *lovely* this time of year."

"Quit whining, before I *toast* your ass," the large man threatened, clutching the shaft of his flamethrower.

"*Coach*," Bogart uttered. "Play nice."

Bogart stepped down the embankment, and into the woods.

Coach nodded obediently, before ushering Dr. Tamblyn down the bank. "After *you*," he teased.

Dr. Tamblyn climbed down the bank, and into the woods, shortly followed by Coach, who leapt from atop the bank, and to the ground below.

Dustin turned around, noticing Andrea, who stood with her rifle over her shoulder. "Go ahead," she encouraged, smiling warmly. "I've got you kids covered."

Dustin climbed down the bank, tumbling clumsily down the last few steps. He was shortly followed by Lucas and Max, who held each other's hand.

Andrea followed, peering over her shoulder as they stepped into the woods.

Bogart led them through the forest, navigating the pine trees, and sinking deeper into the fog.

"You think we can trust him?" asked Lucas, appearing at Dustin's side.

"I dunno," said Dustin. "He said that he *knows* us," he revealed.

"Well, *sure*," said Lucas. "He's been sleeping rough in Hawkins for *years*," he explained. "Pastor Charles once found him sleeping in the Confessional."

"This is *different*," Dustin assured him. "I mean, didn't you *see* what he did to that Demo-Dog?" he asked, his eyes wide in awe. "He *blasted* it with his *mind*!"

Lucas nodded, then asked, "You think he might know where Will is?"

There was a pause. "*Maybe*," said Dustin.

"Where'd you learn to shoot like that?" asked Max, looking up at

Andrea, who clutched an AK-47.

Andrea smiled, gazing ahead at Bogart, who led them deeper into the woods. "The boss taught me everything I know," she explained.

"Bogart?" said Max.

Andrea giggled. "Is *that* what people used to call him?"

Max was confused. "What are you talking about?" she asked.

"It's nothing," Andrea assured her, turning away from Max.

"Who *is* he?" asked Max curiously.

"He *is* the Resistance," Andrea explained, smiling. "Without him, we wouldn't have stood a *chance*," she continued, before turning to Max. "And we would never have found *you*, Max."

Goosebumps covered Max's arms. "You know my name," she said.

"Of course," said Andrea, smiling at Max. "You're kind of a big deal, as far as the Resistance is concerned," she explained.

"Really?" asked Max, smiling.

"*Really*," said Andrea.

Emerging from out of the woods, they crossed the road, and approached a park.

Following Bogart's lead, Dustin passed a wooden sign, and paused to read it.

The sign read: BLUE BEAR TRAILER PARK.

Suddenly, a hand grabbed his shoulder. "C'mon, kid," said Andrea, following the others into the trailer park, where a campfire had been built, and about a half a dozen people were circled around it.

Scattered across the park were numerous trailers, most of which were battered and in ruin.

From out of one of the trailers, a short, bearded man emerged. "Andrea!" he yelled, his eyes wide with excitement. He bolted down the steps, and towards Andrea.

"Robbie," she uttered, and the two wrapped their arms around each other, sharing a warm, loving embrace. "It's *them*," she said, caressing Robbie's cheek. "It's *really* them."

Robbie turned to Dustin, and stared at him in awe, his jaw hanging open.

Dustin turned away from Robbie, but could still feel the weight of his stare.

The trailer park was lively, which surprised Dustin. People were the last thing he had expected to find in this ruin.

As he passed them, and approached the campfire, Dustin noticed each and every one of these people stopping and staring at him, some of them breaking away from their conversations to gaze at him in awe.

"What are they *staring* at?" he asked Lucas, who walked by his side.

"Beats me," Lucas replied.

They approached the campfire, where Bogart had taken a seat atop a tree stump, a small crowd having gathered around him. "Sorry about all the fuss," he apologized. "Everyone was just so excited to meet you."

Behind him, Dustin could hear Dr. Tamblyn yell. Turning around, he saw Dr. Tamblyn wrestling in Coach's arms. "Get your hands *off* me," he yelled, wriggling like a child.

"Coach," said Bogart, in a stern voice. "Take Dr. Tamblyn to my trailer," he instructed. "I'll speak to him in just a moment."

Dr. Tamblyn continued to resist, but his efforts were futile, and Coach dragged him away, his cries fading to a whisper in the wind.

"Dr. Tamblyn holds the answers to *many* of our questions," Bogart

explained over the roaring fire. "You've done the Resistance a great service by bringing him to us."

"Where's Will?" asked Lucas, ignoring Bogart's appreciation.

Bogart sighed. "He's not here," he admitted.

"He *has* to be," Lucas assured him. "We *heard* him."

"No," Dustin uttered, his eyes wide as he made a shocking realization. "We only *thought* we did."

"What are you *talking* about?" asked Max, confused.

"Don't you get it?" asked Dustin, before pointing accusingly at Bogart. "He *made* us hear Will's voice!" he yelled. "He *wanted* us to find him, so he *tricked* us into going through that portal."

Lucas turned to Bogart, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. "How did you know it would work?"

Bogart chuckled. "Because I know who you are, Lucas Sinclair," he said. "And I know that, beneath that defensive shell of yours, you're sweet-natured at heart, and you'd do *anything* for your friends."

"You seem to know an *awful* lot about us," said Max, distrustfully. "Have we even *met* before?"

Bogart smiled warmly. "Not *yet*," he answered vaguely.

"Why did you bring us here?" asked Dustin, growing tired of Bogart's elusive nature.

"Look around you, Dustin," said Bogart in a raspy voice. "Tell me, what do you *see*?"

Dustin looked around at the trailer park's ruins. The trailers were all wrecks, and the people wore dirtied, tattered clothing.

Turning to Bogart, Dustin answered, "*Nothing*."

"That's right," said Bogart, his face twisting into a frown. "Because

there ain't nothing *left*."

"Then why are you people *here*?" asked Lucas, confused.

Bogart scoffed. "Well, it's not like we were given much of a *choice*," he said. "Hawkins is our *home*," he continued, before a sorrowful look grew across his face. "At least, it *was*."

"*Was*?" Max echoed nervously.

Bogart sighed. "The Great War began *and* ended within a matter of hours," he explained. "Once the last atomic bomb had fallen, the world... *our* world.. fell into the deep darkness of a nuclear holocaust. The majority of human civilization crumbled, giving way to the treacherous and unforgiving *wasteland* that *you* call the '*Upside Down*'."

Dustin's heart had sunk. He could feel his legs giving way. He needed to sit down.

"But, I don't understand," Lucas uttered. "Mr. Clarke said that the portal was a tear in *space*," he remembered.

"Space... *and* time," Dustin recalled, before turning to Bogart, his jaw hanging open. "Wait a minute," he uttered, his eyes wide with fear.

"What *year* is it?"

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

Tomorrow, look out for the conclusion to Chapter 3: Tick-Tock!

-G

24. Chapter 3: Tick-Tock (Part 8)

Recommended Listening: *Maneater* by Daryl Hall and John Oates

4th December, 1985

Lawrence Schumacher placed the vinyl record on the platter, and lifted the tonearm, before positioning the needle, and lowering it very gently onto the outer grooves of the vinyl record.

The song *Maneater* by Daryl Hall and John Oates began to play, the music filling the study.

The Mayor of Hawkins began to dance, twisting his hips and clicking his fingers.

Across the room stood Brandy, a tall, red-headed woman in her 30s. She wore a red, satin dress with a wrap front, and a pair of silver hooped earrings.

"Don't you wanna dance?" asked Lawrence, his eyes wide with lust as he stared at Brandy.

"*Dance*," she uttered, approaching Lawrence.

Lawrence's heart rate quickened as Brandy gently ran her soft hands up his chest, removing his jacket, and clutched his shoulders, before pushing him into his armchair.

"*Woah*," said Lawrence, his breath having been taken away. "So, the Mayor of Hawkins gets his own private dance," he said, chuckling nervously. "It's a good thing my wife's working nights."

Brandy approached, taking a seat on Lawrence's lap, and leaning in so close that Lawrence could taste her perfume.

Brandy caressed Lawrence's cheek. Lawrence recoiled. Brandy's hand was as cold as *ice*.

"Your hand," he uttered. "It's *freezing*."

"*Woah, here she comes,*" the vocals from the vinyl record player warned. "*Watch out boy, she'll chew you up.*"

Leaning over Lawrence, Brandy gazed at him with wide, hungry eyes. "Chew. You. *Up,*" she uttered in a raspy voice.

"*Brandy?*" Lawrence uttered, his eyes widening in fear as tendrils began to sprout from out of Brandy's mouth.

The tendrils dripped with slime as they stretched out towards Lawrence, twining around his neck.

Lawrence couldn't breath, the cold tendrils tightening around his throat.

As he choked, Lawrence's vision began to blur.

Razor sharp teeth aligned a mouth that spread open like a flower.

The creature screeched.

"Wait here," Hopper instructed, before climbing out of the SUV.

"Like I've got a *choice,*" Alvin complained from the backseat, his handcuffs clinking as he leaned forward. "Hey, you tell Schumacher that I've *altered* the deal," he yelled. "I want *double* my original offer, for all of my trouble," he continued. "That's right, \$50,000, or I go to my friend at The Indiana Echo, and Schumacher's campaign goes to *shit* before you can say-"

Hopper slammed the door behind him, hushing Alvin's yelling to a dull roar.

He climbed the porch, and approached the front door, where he rang the doorbell.

Inside, Hopper could hear music blaring.

He pounded on the door and yelled, "Larry! It's Jim... Open up!"

Suddenly, Hopper heard a loud shriek from inside the house. "Larry!"

he yelled, before grabbing his revolver, drawing it from its holster.

Hopper kicked the door, but it wouldn't budge. He kicked it again, and again until the lock ruptured, the wood splintering, and the door swung open.

Slowly, Hopper stepped down the hallway, his revolver pointed ahead of him.

From down the hallway, *Maneater* by Daryl Hall and John Oates way playing.

"*She'll only come out at night*," the vocals sang as Hopper approached the study, his palms sweating. "*The lean and hungry type*."

His back to the wall, Hopper could hear the growling of a wild animal coming from within the study.

Hopper emerged from the wall, entering the study with his revolver drawn.

The Mayor of Hawkins sat in his armchair, his arms dangling towards the floor, and covered in blood.

Atop his corpse, a tall, thin, humanoid figure had climbed. It had clawed feet and hands, and its skin was pale and slimy.

The Monster didn't appear to have a face. Instead, its head had spread open like a flower, and wrapped itself around the Mayor's face, digging its teeth into his flesh.

"Oh my God," Hopper uttered, lowering his gun as he stared at the Monster in awe.

Suddenly, the Monster turned around. It screeched at Hopper, its mouth spreading open to reveal razor sharp teeth.

The Monster leapt to the floor, where it stood on all fours, blood and flesh dripping from its mouth. It screeched again, then began to charge towards Hopper, who raised his gun, pointing it at the Monster.

The Monster leapt over Hopper. In the air, it began to contort and bend as its entire shape shifted.

Behind him, the Monster landed softly on the floor.

Turning around, Hopper found a small, grey kitten whose fur was streaked with dark stripes.

Hopper pointed his revolver at the kitten, who stared back at him with small, green eyes the size of marbles.

Hopper's finger hovered over the trigger as he stared down the barrel at the kitten.

He hesitated, and the kitten turned its back on Hopper, its soft paws tapping the floor as it scuttled down the hallway.

"Shit," Hopper cursed, before turning around, where he found the Mayor of Hawkins sat lifelessly in his armchair. The Monster had disemboweled him, his organs pouring out of his chest, and his face was pale and covered in bite marks.

Hopper sighed, then hurried out of the study, clutching his revolver.

Down the hallway, Hopper noticed that the front door was wide open.

Clutching his revolver, Hopper hurried through the front door, and down the porch. Approaching his SUV, he noticed that the backseat was empty. The window was smashed, and dripping with blood, and Hopper noticed several dents in the door.

"Alvin!" he yelled, searching the backseat, which was covered in blood.

Hopper turned around, only to bump into a small, thin man with jet black hair that had been swept back, and who wore a Hawaiian shirt.

Hopper gasped. "Jesus Christ, Alvin," Hopper uttered, catching his breath. "You scared the *shit* outta me."

"Me," said Alvin, in a monotone voice.

"Yes, *you*," said Hopper, angrily. "Where the hell did you go, anyway?" he asked, but Alvin only stared blankly ahead. "And what happened to you *handcuffs*?"

Alvin did not respond. Instead, he simply stood there, in a catatonic stupor.

"Did you see where that.. *thing* went?" asked Hopper.

"That... *thing*," Alvin uttered.

Hopper was confused. "C'mon," he said, "I'm taking you back to the station."

After ushering Alvin into the backseat, Hopper gazed out towards the woods, where he knew the Monster was hiding.

Hopper wondered what exactly he had just seen, and where it was going next.

That's the end of Chapter 3: Tick-Tock, in which we got a lot of answers, but even more questions! I hope you all enjoyed it. I'll be taking a week off to work on some other projects, but I'll be back soon with a brand new chapter!

Speaking of other projects, would any of you be interested in reading some IT fan-fiction?

In Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter, Five confronts his past, whilst Eleven attempts to help Hawkins Lab, and Dustin returns from the Upside Down on a mission to prevent a devastating future.

See you all then! Please leave a REVIEW with your thoughts on this chapter!

-G

25. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 1)

4th December, 1985

Metal screeched, gears turned, and the door to the interrogation room swung open.

Papa stepped inside, approaching Eleven, who sat at the table, her hands cuffed.

Papa's face twisted into a frown, and he glared at the agent standing across from her, who clutched the revolver at his waist.

"Take those *off*," he ordered, and the agent stepped towards her, before unlocking the cuffs, which slid off her hands.

Eleven rubbed her wrists, which were chafed, and had become sore.

"Leave us," Papa ordered, and the agent slid out of the interrogation room, sealing the metal door behind him.

Papa glanced at Eleven, whose eyes were fixed to her feet. "Care to explain what happened back there?" he asked in a harsh voice that suggested that the doctor's patience had ran out.

"Make has *nothing* to do with this," Eleven assured him. "I was just trying to *protect* him."

"And by doing so, you've jeopardized this *entire* operation," Papa snapped viciously. "Do you have *any* idea how *long* we've spent searching for the Shapeshifter?"

Eleven avoided Papa's gaze. He leaned over her, and asked in a gentle voice, "You *are* still going to help, *aren't* you?"

Eleven gazed up at Papa, her eyes narrowed hatefully. "Why do you think I *stayed*?" she asked.

Eleven faced a stainless steel table, upon which sat a large object, cloaked in a white sheet.

Across the table, there stood a short, plump scientist. Nervous, the scientist clicked his pen, a clipboard under his arm. His forehead was dripping with sweat.

At her side, stood Papa, who gazed down at Eleven, and smiled warmly, before turning to the scientist, and nodding, his smile fading.

The scientist pulled away the sheet, revealing the carcass of a dog-like animal, its corpse dripping with slime.

That was when Eleven noticed that the animal didn't have a face.

Eleven gasped, and recoiled.

"It's *okay*, Eleven," Papa assured her, gently grasping her shoulder. "Just... *breath*," he encouraged in a soft voice.

Eleven slowed her breathing, then reached out towards the Demo-Dog, placing her hand on the monster's belly.

Its skin was as cold as *ice*.

"Now, close your eyes," Papa instructed.

Eleven closed her eyes.

"*That's* it," Papa uttered softly. "*Now*, reach out."

Eleven breathed in, and back out. Her heartbeat slowed, and then-
Darkness.

The sound of Eleven's feet splashing in the water echoed into infinity.

Suddenly, a record scratched, and an electric guitar began to blare.

Spinning around, Eleven was greeted by a suited man, sitting in an armchair. He was a short, chubby man with curly hair and thick rimmed glasses. He smiled playfully, gazing beyond Eleven.

Looking over her shoulder, Eleven saw a tall, red-headed woman, wearing a red dress, stepping towards the man in the armchair.

The woman in the red dress passed through Eleven as though she were a ghost, and approached the man in the armchair, the music still blaring.

The man in the armchair chuckled as the woman in the red dress climbed on top of him. "So, the Mayor of Hawkins gets his own private dance," he said, smiling widely. "It's a good thing my wife's working nights."

The woman in the red dress caressed his cheek, and the Mayor of Hawkins recoiled, his smile fading.

"Your hand," he uttered. "It's *freezing*."

"*Woah, here she comes*," a distant voice sang. "*Watch out boy, she'll chew you up*."

The woman in the red dress gazed at the Mayor of Hawkins, her eyes widening as she licked her lips. "*Chew. You. Up*," she said in a hoarse voice.

The Mayor's eyes widened in fear. He gazed up at the woman in the red dress. "*Brandy?*" he uttered.

Tendrils began to sprout from out of Brandy's mouth, dripping with slime as they stretched out towards the Mayor, who began to shriek. The tendrils clasped the Mayor's neck, tightening around his throat, and he began to choke.

Brandy's soft skin began to contort, transforming into a coarse, slimy rind.

As the Mayor gasped for air, Eleven's heart raced. She heard a snap, and the Mayor's gasps silenced.

Eleven slipped, falling into the water with a splash.

The Monster quickly turned around, and screeched at Eleven, its mouth spreading open like a flower, revealing a set of razor-sharp teeth.

Eleven screamed.

"Eleven!" a voice yelled, calling out to her through the darkness.

Suddenly, Eleven was blinded by light.

"Eleven, it's okay!" Papa assured her, clutching her shoulders.

Eleven gazed at Papa, her eyes wide with fear.

"You're *safe*," he promised.

Eleven caught her breath. "*Hawkins*," she uttered.

"*What?*"

"The Shapeshifter," she said. "It's in *Hawkins*."

Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter

5th December, 1985

Mike sat on the grass, overlooking the highway, the headlights like beacons illuminating the dark road below.

He heard shuffling and, to his right, Nancy approached.

"You okay?" she asked, her eyebrows raised. She rubbed her hands awkwardly.

Mike was silent, and continued to watch the cars zipping along the highway.

Nancy took a seat next to him, and began watching the cars, her eyes darting from left to right as they sped past.

"Why'd she stay?" Mike asked, interrupting the silence. "Why didn't she come *with* us?"

Nancy sighed. "I don't know," she admitted. "Maybe she thought she could *help*."

"*Help?*" Mike echoed, confused.

"Mike," Nancy began, her voice soft and gentle, and much unlike the nagging, complacent sister he was so used to. "I know how much you care about Jane, but this is so much *bigger* than just the two of you," she explained. She sighed, then said, "Listen, Mike... *Earlier*, when we were at the Hive... We *found* something," she revealed. "A *portal*."

Mike's eyes widened, and he turned to Nancy. "The Gate," he uttered. "*That's* where it came from."

"Where *what* came from?" asked Nancy.

"The Shapeshifter..."

Leftover fuel dripped out of the nozzle, and onto the concrete below, as Jonathan dragged the hose towards his Ford LTD, and slipped the nozzle into the fuel tank.

Squeezing the handle, Jonathan heard the fuel begin to chug.

Nancy approached, a troubled look across her face.

She looked tired, but Jonathan knew better than to tell her that. "How's he doing?" he asked instead.

Nancy stood with her arms crossed as she shivered in the cold, her skirt billowing in the wind. "I don't know," she admitted, shaking her head.

The fuel continued to chug, and Jonathan turned away. "Look, Nancy," he began, his voice trembling. "I'm *sorry* for getting us mixed up in all of this," he uttered.

"*What?*" said Nancy.

"*I'm* the one who thought it'd be a good idea to chase this story," Jonathan reminded her. "I should have *known* we were in over our head."

"Jonathan, this *isn't* your fault," Nancy assured him.

Jonathan turned to her, his eyebrows furrowed with worry. "I nearly

got us all *killed*, Nancy," he said, before the chugging finally ceased, and he pulled the nozzle from out of the tank, before hanging it back on its hook.

Nancy stepped towards him. "If it hadn't have been for you, I might never have found my little brother," she assured him.

Jonathan sighed, and pulled Nancy into a warm and loving embrace.

Steve sat atop a dumpster, digging into a bag of Tato Skins.

Munching on the chips, Steve watched as Nancy and Jonathan shared a long embrace.

Suddenly, Steve heard a spark. Beside him, Kenny leaned against the dumpster, lighting a cigarette.

Steve watched as Kenny took a drag of his cigarette, and blew out a puff of smoke, before turning to Steve, and nodding courteously.

Steve offered the bag of Tato Skins to Kenny, who grinned, before reaching into bag, and taking a handful of chips.

Over by the fuel pumps, Jonathan still had his arms wrapped around Nancy.

"So," Kenny began, his mouth full. "How long have you been in love with the girl?" he asked, before sinking a handful a chips.

Steve turned to Kenny, his jaw hanging open.

"Wh- *What?*" he stuttered.

Kenny tilted his head, his eyebrows furrowed.

Steve rolled his eyes. "We used to date in high school," he admitted.

"What *happened?*" asked Kenny, before licking his fingers.

Steve sighed. "I messed up," he said.

"And now, *what*, she's caught in a love triangle between two

haircuts?" asked Kenny, chuckling.

Steve shook his head, a somber look on his face. "She made her choice," he said.

Kenny's laughter faded. "Still" he said. "You *could* just tell her how you feel."

"It's too late for that," Steve assured him.

"Not for *you*," Kenny replied. "As for *me*, my wife *died* eleven years ago," he explained. "Every time I think about her, I find myself *wishing* that I'd have just *told* her how much I loved her a little more often."

Kenny dropped his cigarette, stubbing it with his boot, and said, "Don't end up like *me*, wishing you'd have said something when you still had the chance."

Kenny turned his back on Steve, and began to walk away.

Steve watched as Kenny disappeared into the dark.

He tipped the bag of Tato Skins into his mouth.

Kenny approached Mike, who sat on the grass, overlooking the highway.

Kenny groaned as he took a seat next to Mike, who stared blankly ahead.

Silence followed, and Kenny shuffled awkwardly.

"After my wife died, me and my son moved out into the country," Kenny explained, smiling faintly. "Malcolm *hated* me for it. He had to change schools, make new friends... I just wanted us to start afresh."

There was a pause, and Mike remained silent, his face void of expression.

"One day, I think he would have come to understand that, what I did,

I did for *us*, and maybe he would have even learned to *thank* me for it," said Kenny, before turning to Mike, his eyes wide. "What I did to you kids... *Tricking* you like that... It was *wrong*, and I'm *not* asking you to forgive me... I just want you to understand *why*..."

Mike turned to him, his eyes filled with tears. "I understand," he said, his voice trembling.

Kenny smiled widely, and breathed a sigh of relief.

"But, that doesn't mean that I don't *hate* you for it," Mike continued, before turning away from Kenny.

Kenny's heart sank, and his smile faded.

He turned to the highway, watching the cars zipping along the highway, and towards an unknown destination.

Beyond the horizon, the sun began to rise.

5th December, 1985

The sun rose over Downtown Hawkins, and Hawkins Police Station was silhouetted against a pale blue sky.

Everybody Wants to Rule the World by Tears for Fears played on the radio, as Chief Jim Hopper pulled up in front of Hawkins Police Station.

Climbing out of the truck, Callahan stepped out of the station, and approached Hopper, grinning widely. "Mornin', chief," he said, clutching his belt.

Hopper swung open the passenger door, revealing Alvin, who sat in the backseat, staring blankly ahead.

"Well?" Hopper yelled, his eyebrows raised.

"Well?" Alvin echoed, his face void of expression.

"Son of a bitch," Hopper cursed, before grabbing Alvin, and dragging

him out of the truck.

Alvin's skin was cold to the touch.

"So, you found the perp that broke into the Mayor's house?" Callahan asked, walking by Hopper's side as he marched Alvin towards the police station. "Hey, where are his *handcuffs*?"

"Nobody *broke* in," Hopper tried to explain. He sighed, then said, "It's a long story."

"*Long story*," Alvin repeated, tripping clumsily as he was dragged by Hopper.

"Any lucking finding Mrs. Henderson's boy?" Hopper asked.

"Not yet," Callahan replied.

"Well, keep looking," Hopper encouraged.

"That's not all, chief," Callahan admitted, coming to a halt outside the police station. "The boy's *friends*... They're all missing *too*."

"*What*?" said Hopper, a mild chuckle escaping him in disbelief.

"Powell's questioning the Wheelers as we speak," Callahan he explained. "They haven't seen their son since he left home for school yesterday morning," he continued, then smiled. "Funny," he said. "It always seems to be that *same* bunch of kids."

Hopper's smile had faded. "What about Will?" he asked.

"*Byers*?" asked Callahan. "At home with his mother." He waggled his winger, and said, "There was another *boy* with them, too."

Hopper paused, before releasing Alvin, and turning his back on them both.

"Hold him for questioning," he instructed, approaching his truck. "I'll be back."

"Where you goin', chief?" Callahan yelled, as Alvin stood at his side,

staring blankly at his badge.

I hope you're all still enjoying stranger Things 3! We're about halfway through now, but there are still plenty of more surprises to come!

Please leave a REVIEW. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the story so far.

-G

26. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 2)

5th December, 2018

Andrea slid her feet into her boots, and began to tie the laces.

"It's *funny*," said Robbie, sitting on the bed beside her. "Even after *all* this time, I still *hate* watching you leave."

"Robbie, it's *okay*," Andrea assured him. "Coach is gonna be with me the *whole* time."

Robbie smiled faintly. "Where are you *going*, anyway?"

"The sinkhole," said Andrea. "Bogart wants to show the kids what's there."

"*Bogart*?" Robbie echoed.

"That's what they *call* him." Andrea explained.

"So, it's *really* them?" asked Robbie, his eyes wide.

"Yeah. It's *really* them," Andrea assured him.

In the distance, Robbie could hear the noise of thunder, as a storm approached them.

"Just be *safe*, okay?" he said.

The trailer was a scorched ruin.

Inside, root-like tendrils had wrapped themselves around the worktops, and spread across the walls.

Burned books and magazines littered the floor, and from out of a small pile, Dustin picked a comic book.

He smiled. It was his copy of *X-Men* #134, which he had given to Will a couple of years ago.

"Morning, Dustin," said Andrea, startling Dustin as she stepped inside the trailer.

"How can you even *tell* whether it's morning or not?" Dustin asked. "It's *always* dark here".

"Yeah, the radiation storms are to blame for that," said Andrea, pointing towards the window.

On the horizon, bolts of lightning flashed against a red sky.

Andrea turned to Dustin, and said, "I'd say that you get *used* to it, but..."

"You *don't*," said Dustin.

Andrea shook her head, then said, "Anyway, Bogart's looking for you." Andrea turned her back on Dustin, leaving the trailer. "Come on," she said.

"What does *he* want?" asked Dustin, following Andrea out of the trailer.

"To *show* you something."

Sat around the roaring campfire, Max reached out, warming her hands over the crackling fire.

"So, if *this* is thirty-three years later, where are *we*?" she asked, rubbing her hands together.

"What do you mean?" asked Lucas, who sat beside her.

"I should be 47 years-old by now," Max explained. "But I don't see me *anywhere*, or you, or *Dustin*, for that matter."

Lucas turned away, and held his hands over the fire. "We're not *supposed* to meet our future selves," he assured her.

"What are you talking about?" asked Max, her eyes narrowed as he stared at Lucas.

"Haven't you ever *heard* of a time paradox?" asked Lucas, who turned to Max.

"A *what*?" asked Max.

Lucas sighed. "If *I* were to meet my future self, I could end up *rewriting* history," he explained. "It would tear apart all of time and space!"

Max smiled, and shook her head. "You've watched *way* too many movies."

Lucas rolled his eyes. The campfire crackled, the flames licking his hands.

"'The past dictates the future'," said Max.

"*What*?"

"It's something I overheard Bogart saying..." Max turned to Lucas, her eyes wide. "If we're *meant* to meet our future selves, then we *will*," she decided.

"That is, if we even *have* a future," said Lucas.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean... What if we didn't *make* it?"

Suddenly, a large shadow fell over the campfire.

"Hey, kids," said Coach, towering over Max and Lucas. "The boss has been looking for you."

Dr. Tamblyn heard a screech as the metal door swung open, and a shadowy figure stepped into the pantry, where he had been chained to a shelf of Pork & Beans.

From out of the shadows, Bogart emerged. "*Doctor*," he uttered in a raspy voice.

"What the hell do *you* want?" Dr. Tamblyn spat, his fist curling in its cuff.

Bogart tilted his head, smiling cruelly. "You don't *remember* me?" he asked.

"*Should* I?" asked Dr. Tamblyn, confused.

"We've *met* before," Bogart assured him.

Dr. Tamblyn gazed up at Bogart, who wore a torn and dirtied trench coat, and a pair of camo pants, his thinning, grey hair hidden beneath a black beanie.

He did not recognize the disheveled stranger stood before him.

Dr. Tamblyn shook his head. "I *think* I'd remember," he said.

Bogart sighed, then approached Dr. Tamblyn. "We need your help, Doc," he uttered.

Dr. Tamblyn's face twisted into a scowl. "You've gotta lot of nerve asking for *my* help after you dragged me through the forest, and locked me up like a goddamn prisoner!" he yelled, the handcuffs rattling as he shook his fist.

"I *saved* your life," Bogart reminded him, his eyes narrowed. "Now, I'm asking you to return the favor."

Dr. Tamblyn looked at his wrist, which was chaffed and sore. He wanted nothing more than to be set free. "What do you *want*?" he asked Bogart.

"I need you to take a *look* at something," Bogart revealed, his voice hushed to a whisper.

"*Oh*," uttered Dr. Tamblyn, his eyes widening. He shuffled awkwardly, and said with a stutter, "Listen... I'm, uh... I'm *not* that kinda doctor..."

Bogart rolled his eyes. "No, I'm not talking about..." Bogart sighed, then said, "There's a *bomb*."

"A bomb?" Dr. Tamblyn echoes, his eyebrows furrowed. "*How?*"

"Years ago, our country was *attacked*," Bogart began. "The conflict only lasted a couple of hours, but the destruction it brought about was staggering," he continued, before gazing out the window, and at the storm that raged in the distance. "*This... This is all that remains*," he said, before turning back to Dr. Tamblyn, who was shaken. "In the forest, there's an undetonated atom bomb emitting a *serious* amount of radiation," he continued. "It's *unstable*, and I need you to tell me how long we have left before it *detonates*."

Dr. Tamblyn was at a loss for words. "I don't understand," he uttered, staring at Bogart.

Bogart's eyes narrowed as he returned Dr. Tamblyn's gaze.

Dr. Tamblyn's heart sank, and his eyes widened with fear. "What *year* is this?" he asked.

"2018," Bogart revealed. "Welcome to the future, Doc."

"So, did they ever make any more *Star Wars* movies?" asked Dustin, trudging through the forest.

"*What?*" asked Andrea, who marched by his side, a rifle over her shoulder.

"I'm just *saying*, it's been thirty-three years," said Dustin, gazing up at Andrea, eyes wide with curiosity. "They *never* made any more?"

There was a pause, and Andrea bowed her head. "I wouldn't know," she uttered.

"What do you mean?" asked Dustin, confused.

"I wasn't *around* for that part," Andrea explained. "The Great War started before I was even *born*."

There was another pause, and Dustin hesitated, then said, "I'm *sorry*."

Ahead of them, Bogart led them deeper into the forest.

"What about *him*?" asked Dustin.

"*Bogart*? He's been here longer than *any* of us," Andrea explained, smiling faintly. "Hawkins was his *home*."

They emerged from an opening in the forest, and stepped into a small, quiet glade, where ash-like spores floated through the air.

"We're *here*," said Bogart, leading them into the glade.

At the center of the glade was a cavity in the ground, where the surface had begun to sink into a hole, in the middle of which was a gigantic, spherical container, submerged in the sinkhole.

"Holy shit," Dustin cursed.

"Is that what I *think* it is?" asked Lucas, who stood beside Max, clutching her hand.

Behind them, Dr. Tamblyn emerged from out of the forest, clad in a hazmat suit.

"It's a nuclear weapon," he said, his voice muffled by the respirator. "An atom bomb."

"*Doc*," said Bogart, gesturing towards the sinkhole.

Dustin watched as Dr. Tamblyn approached the edge, slowly breathing in and out, before climbing down into the sinkhole, where he raised a gloved hand, and held it to the shell of the atom bomb.

"It's not stable," he said. "*That's* for sure."

Bogart stood at the edge of the sinkhole, overlooking Dr. Tamblyn as he inspected the atom bomb. "How *long* have we got, Doc?" he asked.

"It's hard to be sure," Dr. Tamblyn admitted. As he climbed out of the sinkhole, Bogart offered him a hand, and pulled him to the ground. "My guess would be *weeks*," he said, before removing his headgear. "Maybe even *days*."

"Try *hours*," said Bogart, wearing a somber look.

"What?" Dr. Tamblyn uttered, his eyebrows furrowed. "I *thought*-"

"I can *feel* the energy surrounding that thing," Bogart explained, gesturing towards the atom bomb, which hummed an ominous tone. "It's disrupting the electromagnetic field, and in less than 24 hours, it's gonna *blow*."

"Then why did you ask for my *help*?" Dr. Tamblyn asked, confused.

"I needed you all to see this place for yourself, because you're the only ones who can stop it," Bogart explained, turning towards Dustin, Lucas, and Max.

"How?" asked Max.

"The Shapeshifter," Bogart uttered.

"It's *real*?" Lucas asked, shocked.

"That's right," said Bogart. "After the Great War, the radiation that spread in its wake killed most of the plants and animals that survived the nuclear fire," he explained, as Dustin, Lucas, and Max gathered in a circle around him. "Those that survived, were *mutated*."

Dustin said, "So, the Demo-Dogs are-"

"*Mutants*, yes," Bogart interrupted. "And we've spent *years* fighting them," he explained, gesturing towards Andrea, who clutched her rifle. "You see, there *used* to be a lot *more* of us."

"But, what does any of *this* have to do with the Shapeshifter?" asked Lucas, curiously.

"The Shapeshifter is the most highly-evolved member of its species, with the ability to change its physical form at will," Bogart explained, pacing up and down. "In 1989, a creature *just* like it was *killed* in St. Petersburg, where it was *disguised* as the Russian Ambassador, and on its way to meet with the General Secretary," Bogart continued, before coming to a halt in front of Dustin. "In response, the Soviets declared war on the United States of America."

"I don't understand," Dustin admitted. "Why?"

"Why don't you ask *him*?" Bogart suggested, pointing accusingly at Dr. Tamblyn. "Hawkins Lab spent *months* searching for the Shapeshifter," he explained, and Dr. Tamblyn's eyes narrowed, staring hatefully at Bogart. "Eventually, they *did*, and it became a *tool* of the CIA," Bogart continued. "Tensions with the Soviet Union were high enough as it was, but the Shapeshifter's appearance in Russia..." Bogart shook his head. "*Then*, it was all out war."

Dustin gulped. "So, we have to *kill* it," he said.

"Yes," Bogart uttered. "*Before* Dr. Brenner and his lab can get their hands on it."

"Or else, *what*?" asked Max, her eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"Or else, *this* is your future," Bogart assured them, gesturing towards the giant, undetonated atom bomb that sat in the middle of the sinkhole, humming ominously.

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FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.**

-G

27. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 3)

5th December, 1985

"Downton Hawkins will be shrouded under a cloak of fog tonight sparking warnings to brace for rush hour disruption tomorrow," a voice on the radio warned.

"What did it *look* like?" Joyce asked from across the kitchen table, her eyes bulging with morbid curiosity.

"At *first*, Molly Ringwald," Hopper replied, before taking another drag of his cigarette. "But then, it *transformed* into..." Hopper's voice trailed off, and he blew a puff of smoke from out of his mouth.

"Into *what*?" asked Joyce, nervously.

"A *kitten*," uttered Hopper.

"A *kitten*?" Joyce echoed in disbelief.

"Just a little thing, it was... eyes the size of marbles," Hopper explained. "But, by the time I'd gotten outside, it was gone."

"Wait a minute, you let it go?" asked Joyce, aghast.

"It was just a little kitten, Joyce," Hopper assured her.

"It tore the mayor of Hawkins in half," she reminded him, raising her voice. "And now, we don't know where it is!"

There was a pause, and Hopper sighed. "I think Alvin might have seen it run off into the woods," he explained. "He seemed pretty rattled, too," he recalled, remembering the pale, thin man's catatonic stupor.

"Where is he now?" asked Joyce, eyebrows furrowed nervously.

"Alvin?" asked Hopper, taking another sip of coffee. "In lockup."

Joyce nodded. "Good," she decided, before gazing out the window,

where she noticed Will and Five sitting in the garden, laughing. "What about the boy?"

Hopper gazed out the window. "I haven't told him yet," he revealed. "I was thinking that I'd take him to see Alvin, down at lockup," he revealed. "Give the two of them a chance to *talk*. Maybe *then*, he'll start to open up a little bit."

Joyce wore an anxious look, and Hopper noticed her trembling. He reached out, gently grabbing her hand, and said, "Hey, it's gonna be *okay*."

"I know," said Joyce, sniffing, and feigning a smile. "it's just..."

"*What?*" asked Hopper, gently squeezing her hand.

Joyce's eyes widened in fear, as she gazed at Hopper.

"It feels like it's *all* happening *again*."

"Breathe," said Will in a slow, calming voice. "Just... breathe."

His eyes closed, Five exhaled, his shoulders dropping.

"Good," said Will, stood by his side. "Now," he began, "reach out."

There was a long, silent pause. Suddenly, Five stretched his arm out in front of him, and towards the garden gnome sat across the garden, which Chester had stolen from Phil Larson's garden a couple of years ago.

Will sighed, then shook his head. "No, I meant..." He paused, then gazed deeply into Five's eyes. "You have to use the Force."

"The Force?"

"The Force is what gives the Jedi their power," Will explains. "It's energy connects everything living thing in the galaxy." Will grabbed Five by the shoulders, staring intently at him. "You can feel it... All you have to do is focus!"

Five shook him off, and yelled, "That's not how it works!" He turned his back on Will, who stood in silence. "Back at the trailer park, I was scared." He turned to Will, his eyes wide. "I thought that you were going to get hurt."

Will cocked his head, confused.

Five stepped closer to Will. "These... abilities... they only seem to work when I *need* them to... When the people that I care about are in trouble," he explained. "People like *you*."

Will smiled. He reached out, and clutched Five's hand, causing the boy to grin.

"Will!" a hoarse voice yelled, and Hopper stood across the backyard, his hands on his hips. "I need you boys to come down the station."

Will shared an anxious look with Five, and gently squeezed his hand.

"I'll be right outside, kid," Officer Callahan reassured him, as Five stepped into the holding area.

He jumped with fright as the steel door slammed behind him, before approaching the cell.

Alvin stood, his green, piercing eyes fixated on Five, watching the boy through the metal bars as he approached his cell.

There was a pause, and Five said, "Well?" his eyes wide, expectantly. "Don't you have anything to say?"

Silence followed. Alvin only stared at Five, a blank expression across his face. "Anything...to... say?" he echoed with a slow, ominous hiss.

"Yeah, I do," said Five, nodding confidently. "I'm done being your weapon," he assured Alvin. "I have my own life now... I have friends... A family..." Five smiled as he thought back to the moment he had shared with Will earlier, and the way the boy had made him feel when he'd held his hand.

"Family," Alvin hissed, his eyes wide.

"That's right," Five replied, confronting Alvin. "As for you," he began, his eyes narrowing with hatred, "I hope I never see you again." He pointed at Alvin accusingly, and said, "You used me... You imprisoned me.." Five smiled, realizing that, now, the shoe was on the other foot. "You're a monster."

Alvin's eyes widened, and he stared deeply into Five's eyes. "Monster," he hissed.

Five felt a cold shiver down his spine. He stepped closer to the cell, his eyes narrowed as he returned Alvin's gaze. "What is wrong with you?" he asked, confused.

Five leaned closer, staring deep into Alvin's green eyes until they engulfed him and-

Darkness.

Suddenly, Five was stood above a short, chubby man with curly hair and thick rimmed glasses, who sat lifelessly in a leather armchair, his eyes wide with fear.

After letting out a loud, piercing shriek, Five dug into the man's chest, sinking his teeth into his cold flesh, and spraying blood and guts across the room like water from a garden hose, as he ripped his torso to shreds.

Suddenly, Five was back in the holding area. He stepped back from the cell, gasping for air, as Alvin's gaze remained fixated on him.

Five stared at Alvin in horror, shaking as he pointed towards him. "You," he uttered nervously.

"What are you?" he asked.

"His name's Malcolm Clarke," Hopper explained, passing a case file across his desk, and into Will's hands.

Will flicked through the file, and came across an old, worn photograph of a young boy, no more than eight years-old, atop a tractor, wearing an orange trucker cap. "Malcolm," he uttered.

"His father, Kenny, a crop farmer in Bloomington, reported him missing about seven years ago," Hopper continued, before taking a drag of his cigarette. "Apparently, he tried to convince the Sheriff that his son had been abducted by aliens," Hopper added, sniggering. "I guess now we know the truth."

"Hawkins Lab," said Joyce, standing in the corner, also smoking. She blew out a puff of smoke, then said, "What about the others? Does he know where they are?"

"No," Will replied, turning to his Mother, an uncertain look on his face. "I don't know," he admitted. "Why?"

Joyce sighed, and shared a concerned look with Hopper.

Will turned to Hopper, his eyes wide with fear. "Kid," Hopper began, "nobody's seen your friends in almost twenty-four hours. Their parents are worried sick," he explained, a solemn look growing across his tired face. "And so am I," he assured him.

"Why do you think that Five-" Will began, before stuttering. "Why do you think that Malcolm would know where my friends are?"

Hopper leaned closer to Will, his eyes narrowing. "He can do things, right?" he asked. "The same way Jane can?"

Will dodged eye contact with Hopper. He twiddled his thumbs anxiously. "No," he said. "Not like Jane, anyway," he explained, remembering the incident in the trailer park. "Malcolm's... different. He still doesn't know how to use his powers properly."

"Well, the sooner he does, the better," said Hopper, rising from his chair, and stubbing a cigarette in his ashtray. "'Cause there's something bad out in those woods, and I'm starting to think that that kid might be our key to stopping it."

"What?" asked Will, eyes widening. "What's out there?"

"I dunno," Hopper admitted, his hands on his hips. "But it sure ain't from around here."

"We have to find it," said Joyce assertively.

"I know," Hopper agreed. "Only problem is, it does a pretty good job of staying hidden."

Will's stomach dropped, as a disturbing realization settled upon him. He gulped. "The Shapeshifter," he uttered nervously.

At that moment, Five burst into the Chief's office.

Will rose from his seat. "Five!" he yelled, noticing the tears streaming down his cheeks. "You okay?"

"It's Alvin," Five uttered, his voice trembling. "I think something's wrong."

Will approached Five, then pulled him into a warm embrace. "It's okay," he assured him.

"Everything's going to be okay," Will promised his friend.

I'm back! I'm so sorry for not updating in so long. I've been working on a few different projects at the moment, all whilst graduating from College and starting a new job! A very hectic time in my life, but I'm glad people are still reading and enjoying this story, so I hope people are still interested to read new chapters. If so, I'll be sure to keep updating on amore regular basis!

Be sure to leave a REIVEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

28. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 4)

5th December, 1985

In the distance, a storm brewed.

The moon shone like a beacon above the ruins of Hawkins.

"I still don't get it," Dustin admitted, walking by Bogart's side.

"Get *what*?" the gruff old man asked.

"How have all of you been *surviving* out here all these years?" Dustin asked.

Bogart sighed, a somber look across his old, tired face. "Not all of us have," he reminded him. "We've lost a lot friends since the Great War began."

Dustin noticed a troubled look upon Bogart's face. "I'm sorry," he said sincerely.

Bogart shook his head. "They all died fighting in what they believed in," he assured Dustin. "They died for the resistance. And they died knowing that, thanks to their sacrifice, the Prophecy would be fulfilled."

"What prophecy?" Dustin asked.

Bogart paused, and grabbed Dustin's shoulders. "Dustin," he began, "did you ever think to wonder why the Resistance waited all these years to seek you out?"

Dustin, his eyes wide, shook his head.

Bogart smiled, before pointing up to the moon. "Every 33 years, the cycle of the moon is synchronized with that of the sun," he began to explain. "Everything *repeats*, and, for short while - two or three years - the electromagnetic field is disrupted, and the fabric between the different dimensions in space and time becomes weakened."

"*That's* how El was able to open the Gate in the first place," Dustin came to realize.

"*And*, how I was able to create a portal between this dimension and your own in *The Hive*," Bogart explained. "I did that because I was looking for *you*."

Dustin gulped nervously. "*Me?*" he asked.

"That's right, Dustin," said Bogart. "I've been watching you for a long time now, and after you and your friends were able to free Will from the Mind Flayer, I knew that you had what it takes to help the Resistance."

Dustin smiled, revealing his pearls.

"The Prophecy says that there is a boy, in Hawkins, who has what it takes to defeat the Shapeshifter once and for all, and save our reality from total annihilation," Bogart revealed.

Dustin's smile grew, his eyes widening. "*Me... I'm* the boy," he realized.

Bogart's smile faded. "*No*," he revealed.

"Oh," Dustin uttered in disappointment.

"But, I *know* that you can help us find him," Bogart reassured him, before patting him on the back, and marching ahead.

"Wait, Bogart!" Dustin yelled.

"*Please*," Bogart snapped. "*Please*, don't call me by that name. It's *demeaning*."

"I don't even know what your real name *is*," Dustin explained.

Bogart took a moment to think. "Mal," he decided. "You can call me Mal."

"Okay, *Mal*," Dustin mocked, "where the hell are we going?"

Bogart smiled. "To meet our destiny," he revealed, gesturing to the building down the road.

The ruins of Bradley's Big Buy.

In the distance, a demo-dog roared.

"Can't they wait until after the end of the world to take a time-out?" Max complained, watching as Bogart walked side-by-side with Dustin, whispering in his ear along the way.

"The world's not going to end," Lucas assured her, frustrated by her gullibleness.

Max's eyes widened in surprise. Stunned, she said, "You didn't see that giant time-bomb back there?"

"How do you know that thing is even active?" Lucas asked, his frustration growing.

"Oh, it's active," an ominous voice confirmed.

Behind them, Dr. Tamblyn wore an anxious look. His jacket was covered in mud, and his tie hung loosely around his neck. "Not only that, but it's becoming increasingly unstable," he explained, eyes bulging behind the red and blue lenses of his glasses. "It's disrupting the electromagnetic field," he continued, before rubbing his jaw, and adding, "I could feel my fillings being yanked out of my teeth back in that sinkhole."

Lucas turned from Dr. Tamblyn, over to Bogart, who walked beside Dustin. "Do you believe him?" he asked, before turning back to Dr. Tamblyn. "About the Shapeshifter?"

"What about it?" the doctor asked.

"If we kill it, will all of this really go away?" asked Max, gesturing towards the wasteland that surrounded them. "Will everything go back to the way that it was?"

Dr. Tamblyn considered Bogart's theory. "I'm not sure," he admitted.

"All I know is that I don't trust that old man."

"Bogart?" asked Lucas, confused. "I thought you said that he was telling the truth about the atom bomb?"

"I wasn't calling him a liar," Dr. Tamblyn reminded Lucas, as they approached the supermarket. "But, that still doesn't mean to say that I trust the guy."

"Why not?" Max asked.

Dr. Tamblyn's eyes narrowed as he watched the old man lead them deeper into the ruins.

"I think that we've met before," the doctor explained. "I didn't trust him then, and I sure as shit don't trust him now."

"You've met him before?" asked Lucas, eyes wide with curiosity. "Who is he?"

"We're here!" yelled Bogart, leading them inside the roofless ruins of a scorched, derelict building.

Below his feet, Lucas noticed a carpet. Although it was ripped and burnt, he could make out the words: BRADLEY'S BIG BUY.

The supermarket was a cold, dark, and eerie ruin. Spores danced through the air, and overgrown tendrils spread throughout the ruins, climbing up the walls, and wrapping themselves around the shelves and the checkout counters.

"What the hell are we doing here?" asked Lucas, as he, Max, and Dr. Tamblyn came to an assertive halt.

Bogart turned, taken aback by Lucas' attitude.

Dustin spun around. He stared at Lucas, his eyes wide and expectant. "Lucas," he said firmly.

Bogart shook his hand at Dustin, silencing him. "Is there a problem, Sinclair?"

"Yeah, there is," Lucas confirmed, stepping forward. "We've just spent hours walking through that wasteland out there, dodging demo-dogs, and trying not to freeze to death, and for what?" he asked, his frustration growing. "So that you could fetch a carton of eggs?"

"Listen, Lucas, I know you're upset," said Bogart calmly. "But, events set in motion long ago will be coming to a conclusion here, today, in this very supermarket. Now, it is vital that what is about to happen goes exactly to plan. Our future, and the future of everyone in Hawkins, depends on it."

"Why should we trust you?" asked Max. "We don't even know you!"

"Not yet," uttered Bogart. "But you will."

Nearby, Lucas heard the clang of metal, and the growls of a pack of demo-dogs.

"Shit," Bogart cursed, before grabbing Dustin by his backpack, and yanking him across the supermarket floor. "We have to go! Hurry!"

Lucas looked over his shoulder, his eyes wide with fear.

Three silhouettes stood in the doorway.

Behind them, a bolt of lightning struck, and a thunderous roar followed.

Max grabbed Lucas' hand, and dragged him across the supermarket, following Bogart and Dustin.

Behind them, Dr. Tamblyn ran, whelping as the demo-dogs began their pursuit.

The demo-dogs drooled as they bared their razor-sharp teeth.

Down the aisle, they raced. Lucas, refusing to look over his shoulder, could hear the beast's feet hitting the floor, getting closer and closer.

Behind him, Lucas heard a thud, and Dr. Tamblyn cried. He spun around, and saw that the Doctor had fallen to the floor.

Looking over his shoulder, the Doctor saw the demo-dogs approaching, rapidly closing the distance between them and their meal. He turned back to Lucas, his eyes bulging behind a cracked pair of sunglasses. "Help me!" he yelled.

Lucas and Max exchanged an anxious look. They nodded, then ran towards the Doctor, grabbing an arm each, and sharing his weight as they carried him over their shoulders.

"Hurry!" yelled Bogart, who stood at the end of the aisle, with Dustin at his side.

Bogart waved his arm, and the wall cracked. Within the crack, a red and blue glow radiated from behind a pulsing, fleshy membrane, which dripped with slime.

Bogart had opened a portal.

Carrying Dr. Tamblyn over their shoulders, Lucas and Max ran down the aisle. Behind them, the pack of demo-dogs snarled as they began to close in on them.

Lucas watched as Bogart tilted his head, and narrowed his eyes. He waved his arm and, behind Lucas, one of the shelves collapsed, and crushed the pack of demo-dogs.

Metal clanged and rattled, and the creatures whimpered, trapped underneath the shelves.

"That was awesome!" Dustin exclaimed, smiling.

Bogart grabbed Dustin by the shoulders. "The boy," he said gravely. "I need you to find him"

"But, how?" asked Dustin, his voice trembling with fear. "I don't even know his name."

"His name is Malcolm," Bogart revealed, "and he's just a scared and confused little boy." Bogart smiled, showing a faint glimmer of hope. "He could really use a friend like you right now."

Dustin returned Bogart's faint smile.

"Now, go!" Bogart yelled. "Hurry!"

Dustin climbed into the portal, followed by Lucas and Max, who carried Dr. Tamblyn all the way through.

Behind them, the demo-dogs roared, and metal crashed as they broke free of their trap.

As they sank deeper into the portal, they were almost blinded by a bright light.

The last thing they heard were Bogart's screams.

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29. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 5)

Gordie O'Connell dragged the steel door to a firm close, before lowering the latch, and sealing the freezer tight.

Passing through the store room, carrying a tray of milk cartons, Gordie noticed Robert, his manager, placing a framed photograph under the wall.

Curiously, Gordie approached Robert, and discovered that on display was a photo of Tommy H, a smile spread across his freckled face.

Gordie's heart sank. He'd been working at Bradley's Big Buy for almost two years now, whilst Tommy had been stacking shelves for less than three months, and *already*, he had beaten Gordie to the most respected of accolades: Employee of the Month.

Robert noticed Gordie's disappointment. "For starters, why don't you try wiping that miserable look off your face?" he suggested. "That's the *last* thing our customers wanna see when they walk into our store."

Robert left Gordie to stare at his gloomy reflection in the framed photo.

"Wait!" he urged, turning around. "Robert!" he yelled.

Robert spun around, his eyes brows raised expectedly. "Yes?" he asked, his arms folded.

"Sir," he began, respectfully, "I'm a little confused." He licked his lips, then said, "Tommy's been here barely three months."

"That's right," Robert confirmed, looking down his nose at Gordie. "And he's achieved more in those three months than you have in two years," he assured him.

Embarrassed, Gordie bowed his head.

Robert felt sorry for the young man. He placed a hand on his shoulder, and said in a gentle voice, "Listen, Gordie, you're a nice

guy. You just need to start acting like the kind of person that you want to *be* in life." He patted Gordie on the shoulder, then said, "You want 'Employee of the Month'? Then start acting like the employee of the month."

Robert turned his back on Gordie, then disappeared into his office.

Frustrated, Gordie let out a sigh.

Behind him, he heard a loud crash.

Gordie turned around. The store room was empty.

Muffled voices shouted and cried.

He heard the screeching of metal. The freezer door began to slide open, revealing three teenagers, and an older man in a suit jacket and tie, all of whom were covered in mud and slime.

Gordie's jaw hung open.

He dropped the tray of milk, which landed with a crash on the store room floor.

Robert typed into his adding machine, before tearing the paper tape from out of the machine, and copying the calculations into his checkbook.

There was a knock at the door, and Robert removed his glasses from atop his nose.

"Come in," he yelled.

"Sir," uttered Gordie, breathing heavily as he slid into his office. "We need to talk."

Robert sighed, his patience wearing thin with the young man. "Dammit, Gordie, there's nothing to talk about," he yelled. "Tommy is employee of the month, and that's final. If you don't like that, then you know where the door-"

"This isn't about your 'Employee of the Month' bullshit!" yelled Gordie.

The room fell silent. Robert was speechless.

Gordie stood awkwardly in the doorway, then turned away and said, "Maybe you should just come in."

In walked three teenagers, followed by an older man in a suit jacket and tie.

Robert was aghast. Mud and slime dripped from the older man's jacket, and one of the teenagers, a red-headed girl no older than his own daughter, was clasping a pistol.

Robert rose from his desk. "What the hell is going on here?"

"They appeared in one of the freezers," Gordie explained. "They asked to see the manager."

Robert's eyes narrowed. He recognized one of the teenagers, a curly-haired boy wearing a red, white, and blue trucker cap. "You're Mrs. Henderson's boy, aren't you?" he asked. "What were you doing in the freezer? Where the hell did you come from?"

Dustin shared an awkward glance with the other teenagers, before turning back to Robert. "The future," he uttered.

There was a pause. "Get out," Robert urged.

"Wait," said the older man, stepping forward. He had grey, frizzy hair, and wore a pair of cracked sunglasses, and a suit jacket and tie that were covered in mud and slime. "This isn't some elaborate prank that the boy is playing," he explained, before turning to Dustin, who smiled faintly. He turned back to Robert, and said, "This is real."

Robert crossed his arms. "You expect me to believe that you're from the future?"

"Actually," the girl began, "I'm from California."

"Where we're from doesn't matter," Dustin assured him. "It's why

we're here that's important."

"Okay," said Robert, "then why are you here?"

"We're looking for someone," the other teenager, a dark-skinned boy, explained. "A boy."

"His name is Malcolm," Dustin revealed. "And it's very important that we find him."

"This is all very... dramatic," said Robert from the other side of his desk. "But, that still doesn't explain what brings you here, to my store. What are you kids doing here?"

"That's a good question!" the dark-skinned boy exclaimed, turning to Dustin. "Why are we here?"

"Because, Bogart brought us here!" Dustin reminded him.

"I know that," Lucas assured him as he began to lose his temper. "I'm asking you why that crazy old coot thought to teleport us to a grocery store!"

"I don't know, but I know that he brought us here for a reason," said Dustin. "This is all part of Bogart's plan."

"Wait, who the hell is Bogart?" asked Robert, confused.

"Some crazy old man who can move things with his mind," said Max, grinning.

It was then that Robert remembered the girl that had shoplifted from Bradley's Big Buy only two years ago, before smashing the front doors with her mind.

"Who the hell are you kids?" he asked, his eyes wide with fear.

"Attention all customers," Gordie's voice called over the tannoy, echoing through the store. "Due to a boiler leak, Bradley's Big Buy will shortly be closing. Please, make your way to the checkout points, and out of the store. Thank you for shopping at Bradley's Big Buy."

"There are two exits," Robert explained, leading them across the supermarket floor. "The loading bay doors at the rear of the store, and the front entrance."

Dustin noticed the panels of glass that formed the front of the store, and asked. "How strong is that glass?"

"Not strong enough," Lucas answered.

"What exactly are we expecting?" asked Robert, who was beginning to panic. "Bears? Wolves? Rabid dogs?"

"They're not dogs," Max assured him.

"Well, after your friend robbed us and smashed our front doors, we had to replace the entire front section of the store replaced with tempered glass," Robert explained. "That hold against whatever's coming."

"Don't be so sure," Dr. Tamblyn warned.

Shoppers still walked the floor, pushing trollies up and down the aisles.

Dustin turned to Robert and said, "You need to get everyone far away from here. *Now*."

Robert wanted to argue. Instead, he bit his lip and nodded. Noticing a nearby customer picking fruit from a basket, he said, "Excuse me, sir, we're about to close. I'm gonna have to ask you to make your way to a checkout point."

The customer turned to face Robert. He wore a confused look, and had neatly combed brown hair, with a thick brown moustache.

"Mr Clarke?" said Dustin, surprised to see his Science teacher.

"Dustin," Mr Clarke uttered. His eyes were wide with fear. He noticed Lucas and Max also stood beside him. "What are you all doing here?"

"Not picking strawberries," said Max.

Mr. Clarke turned to Dustin, a sombre look on his face. "Dustin, there's something I need to tell you."

"What is it?" asked Dustin.

"It's about Mike... And Jane... I think they're in some serious trouble."

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30. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 6)

5th December, 1985

They hit a bump in the road, and Mike bounced in the backseat, clutching the walkie-talkie in his hands.

To his right, Kenny stared out of the window, watching as a gap in the trees revealed the town of Hawkins.

"So," Steve began, sitting to Mike's left, "has anyone ever been a fugitive before?"

In the front, Jonathan turned up the radio. *Fox on the Run* by Sweet was playing.

"What the matter, Byers?" asked Steve. "Not interested in small talk?"

From the passenger seat, Nancy turned to Steve, her eyebrows creased in anger. "Steve," she snapped. "*Chill*."

"Chill?" Steve echoed in frustration. "We're on the run from the CIA, the NSA, and God knows what else, and you want me to *chill*!?" Steve shook his head, angrily. "I can't go home, I can't go to work, I can't do anything ever again without constantly looking over my shoulder!"

"You're overreacting!" Mike tried to assure him.

"Overreacting?" asked Steve. "This is Hawkins Lab we're talking about!" he yelled. "If they find us, they'll kill us *all*, and there's nobody who can help us."

Mike's walkie-talkie frizzled, and through the crackling and the whining, a familiar voice yelled, "Code red! Code red! Mike, are you there? Mike!"

Mike thumbed the walkie-talkie. "Dustin? It's Mike! I'm here!"

"Mike!?" Dustin replied in surprise. "Jesus, am I glad to hear your voice! We all thought you were a goner."

"Dustin, where are you?" asked Mike.

"Bradley's Big Buy," Dustin revealed. "And you've gotta get over here."

"What the hell are they doing *there*?" asked Nancy.

"What are you doing at Bradley's Big Buy?" asked Mike. "What's going on?"

"Mike," Dustin began, "shit's about to hit the fan. You and Jane have gotta get over here!"

Mike and Nancy shared an uncertain look.

Nancy nodded, and Mike thumbed the walkie-talkie. "We're on our way!" he promised.

"Wait a minute," Steve uttered. "We're going *towards* the code red?"

The automatic doors slid open, and a musical chime played, welcoming Mike into Bradley's Big Buy.

"Sorry, kid," said an employee wearing a red apron, "We're closed."

"O'Connell? Is that you?" asked Steve, stepping into the store, his eyes narrowed.

"Steve?" Gordie uttered, his voice trembling. "What are you doing here?"

"I've been wondering that myself," Steve admitted, grinning.

Behind them, Nancy, Jonathan, and Kenny stepped into the store.

"Who's this?" asked Nancy.

"Gordie O'Connell," Steve answered, his hands on his hips. "He was lab partner in eighth grade."

"I don't ever remember being your lab partner," Gordie assured him.

"Oh yeah?" asked Steve. "I remember you pissing yourself in front of

the entire class."

Gordie hung his head in embarrassment.

"Steve, quit being an asshole," Jonathan snapped.

Steve turned to Jonathan, his eyebrows furrowed. "What the hell did you call me, Byers?"

"Steve," Nancy said firmly. "Not now."

Steve turned to Nancy, his eyes narrowed with hatred. "Then when?" he asked coldly.

The air was thick with tension, when a familiar voice yelled, "Mike!"

From behind Gordie, Dustin appeared, a wide grin spread across his face.

"Dustin!" Mike yelled happily, before running towards Dustin, and pulling him into a tight, loving embrace.

Letting Dustin go, Mike looked down, and noticed that he was covered in mud and slime. "Holy shit," he cursed. "What happened to you?"

"It's kind of a long story," Dustin assured him.

Behind him, Lucas and Max appeared.

"It's about time you showed up," Lucas snapped. His eyes were narrowed, and he wore a hateful scowl. "Where the hell have you been?"

Mike was speechless. "I... Uh..."

"I'm just kidding," said Lucas, smiling, before hugging Mike.

"Where's Jane?" asked Max, looking worried.

Mike sighed. He wore a defeated look. "She's not here," he admitted painfully.

"You mean, she's still with Hawkins Lab?" asked Dustin.

Mike was confused. "How do you-"

Mr. Clarke appeared. At the sight of Mike, he smiled faintly. "Mike," he said weakly, putting a hand on his shoulder. "I'm so glad you're okay." He looked past him, noticing his brother, Kenny. His smile faded, and twisted into a hateful scowl.

Behind Mike, Kenny approached, removing his trucker cap, which he clutched awkwardly. "Scott," he said. "It's good to see you."

Mr. Clarke opened his arms, and shared an embrace with his brother.

Steve passed Mike, and approached Dustin. "Hey, kid," he said, and the two fist-bumped.

"So, is it true?" asked Lucas, eyes wide. "Is Brenner really still alive?"

"Yeah," Mike replied. "And he's looking for the Shapeshifter."

Dustin, Lucas, and Max shared an awkward glance. "So are we," Dustin explained.

"What?" asked Mike, confused.

"Hang on a second," Steve interrupted. "How do you know that this thing is even real?" he asked. "I mean, have any of you actually seen the Shapeshifter?"

"El has," said Mike. "And she's the only one who can stop it."

"Maybe not," said Dustin.

Mike turned to Dustin, and asked, "What do you mean?"

"There's a boy," Dustin began. "Bogart said that he's the only one who can stop the Shapeshifter."

"Bogart?" Steve echoed in confusion. "That creepy old man who used to sleep in the junkyard?"

"He's not a creepy old man!" Dustin yelled in defense. "He's from the

future."

"Oh, well, that's just great," Steve replied sarcastically.

"The boy," said Nancy. "Who is he?"

"His name is Malcolm," Dustin revealed.

"Malcolm," Kenny uttered. "That's my boy's name..."

"Malcolm is your son?" Dustin asked.

"He's been missing for years," Kenny explained. "He was abducted by those whackos at Hawkins Lab, but he escaped..."

"El told me that there were others just like here," Mike suggested, before turning to Dustin. "Maybe this kid is like El. Maybe he's special too."

"If that's true," Dustin began, "then we have to find him."

"Uh, guys," Jonathan uttered, pointing outside.

Mike felt a cold chill crawl down his spine. Turning around, he noticed a thick wave of mist enveloping Hawkins, and tumbling towards Bradley's Big Buy.

"Well, shit," Dustin cursed.

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31. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 7)

5th December, 1985

It was almost four o'clock in the afternoon, and Downtown Hawkins had reached gridlock.

"C'mon, dammit," Joyce yelled, before honking her horn in furious anger. They had been stuck on Mulberry Street for the last ten minutes, and Joyce's Ford Pinto had hardly budged.

Sat in the backseat, and clutching his walkie-talkie, Will turned to Malcolm, who gazed out the window. "You okay, Malcolm?" he asked, gently clutching his knee.

Malcolm jumped in fright, then snapped, "Don't call me that." He pulled up his sleeve, revealing the number inked on his forearm: 005. "That's not my name," he uttered, before looking up at Will, his eyes wide with dread. "I don't have a name."

"Yes, you do!" Will insisted. "And you have a family too!" he reminded his friend, brimming with excitement. "Your Dad... He's spent *years* looking for you!"

Malcolm pulled down his sleeve, before lifting his hand in front of his eyes. "What if he doesn't like what he finds?" he wondered.

"He doesn't have a choice," Joyce assured him, watching the boys through the rear-view mirror. She smiled generously, then added, "Becoming a parent is one of the most *terrifying* experiences of your life, and you know what?" Joyce looked over her shoulder. "It never gets any easier," she said, before smiling at Will. She turned around, then said, "But, if you're lucky, you get to watch your children grow into being these kind, honest, and compassionate human beings." She peered over her shoulder at Malcolm, then said, "I'm sure your father would be very proud of the young man you've become."

Malcolm smiled warmly, then shared a hopeful look with Will, who gently squeezed his hand.

The radio fizzed. *Bad Moon Rising* by Credence Clearwater began to play.

Outside, the sound of cars honking intensified, and shapes moved past Will's window at an alarming rate.

Confused, Will swung open his door, and stepped outside, still clutching his walkie-talkie.

"Will!" Joyce yelled.

Having abandoned their vehicles, drivers ran past Will, down Mulberry Street, many of them yelling and shrieking in fear.

Looking up the street, Will saw a thick wave of mist tumbling down the road.

Buildings, cars, and even people were enveloped by the mist, disappearing right in front of Will's eyes, their shouts and screams fading into silence.

The sight of the mist filled Will with dread as it crawled towards them.

Climbing out of the Ford Pinto, Joyce's jaw hung open, and her eyes were wide with fear, as she watched Downtown Hawkins become cloaked in the thick mist.

"We have to go!" Will yelled.

Joyce nodded, then swung open the passenger door, and helped Malcolm to climb out of the car.

On Mulberry Street, nothing remained but a queue of abandoned cars, slowly being enveloped by the thick mist, which hurtled towards them closer and closer until-

Silence.

Consumed by the thick mist, Will could scarcely see his own hand in front of his face.

"Mom!" Will yelled. "Mom, where are you!?"

"Over here!" Joyce's voice yelled from somewhere nearby.

"Will?" Malcolm's voice called, panicking. "Will!"

Stepping through the mist, Will passed abandoned cars, warning tones sounding from inside the vehicles.

Suddenly, a loud, guttural growl echoed through the street, stopping Will in his tracks.

"What was that?" asked Malcolm, his voice trembling with fear.

"Nobody move," said Will.

A shape appeared in the mist, and it crept towards Will. It was a large, dog-like creature, whose skin dripped with slime.

Suddenly, Will's walkie-talkie fizzed, and a crackly voice on the other side yelled, "Will! Will, do you copy?"

The demo-dog roared, its face opening up like flower petals to reveal a set of razor-sharp teeth.

"Will!" Joyce yelled, and the demo-dog turned towards her, before leaping atop the bonnet of a Chrysler, where it roared at Joyce, spraying saliva all over her face.

"Mom!" Will cried, and the demo-dog leapt onto his mother, knocking her to the ground.

As she screamed, the demo-dog dug its claws into her chest, drawing blood.

Suddenly, the demo-dog burst, the bloody explosion leaving Joyce covered in flesh and slime.

From out of the mist stepped Malcolm, his arm stretched out, and blood trickling from his nose.

Will approached his mother, and knelt by her side. Her jacket was

covered in blood. "Mom," Will whimpered, as he clutched her hand.

"Is she okay?" asked Malcolm, wiping blood from his nose.

Will and Malcolm shared a concerned look, when Will's walkie-talkie crackled again, and a familiar voice said, "Will, do you copy? Where the hell are you?"

Will thumbed the walkie-talkie, and said, "Dustin? I'm on Mulberry Street." He paused, his voice trembling with fear. "Mom's hurt. We need help!"

"Son of a bitch," Dustin cursed. "What the hell happened?"

"The mist," Will uttered. "They're in the mist!"

"We're on our way," Dustin promised.

In the distance, Will heard the growls of a pack of demo-dogs.

"We have to get out of here," said Malcolm, his eyes wide with fear.

Will nodded, then slid his mother's arm over his shoulders. "Here, help me lift her up," he said, and Malcolm grabbed Joyce's other arm.

Together, the two boys carried Joyce through the mist, and down Mulberry Street.

"What the hell was that thing?" asked Malcolm, breathing heavily as he carried Joyce over his shoulders.

"A demo-dog," said Will. "And it sounds like there are more of them on the way."

"More?" Malcolm echoed in fright. "How many?"

"An army," Will uttered. "The Mind Flayer's army."

"The Mind Flayer," said Malcolm, recalling the dream in which he'd encountered the monster made of shadows. "Will," he uttered, "you don't think he's looking for me, do you?"

Suddenly, a large shadow leapt out of the mist, and landed in front of

them.

The boys screamed, and the demo-dog roared, baring its razor-sharp teeth.

From out of nowhere, there was a loud crunch, as the demo-dog was crushed by a spiked bat hammering away at its skull.

The demo-dog whimpered as the spiked bat came hammering down one last time, killing it.

A tall, shadowy figure loomed over the carcass, resting the spiked bat over his shoulder.

"Get inside!" Steve Harrington yelled, pointing towards the front doors to Bradley's Big Buy, which were being held open by Dustin.

"Will!" Dustin yelled, his eyes wide with shock as Will and Malcolm carried Joyce towards him. "Mrs. Byers? What the hell happened?" he asked, noticing that she was covered in blood. "A little help?" he yelled to those inside the store.

Passing Dustin, and entering Bradley's Big Buy, Nancy and Jonathan rushed towards them.

"Mom?" Jonathan cried, as Will and Malcolm passed Joyce into his arms. "Where's Dr. Tamblyn? She needs help!"

"He's in the store room with Mr. Clarke and his brother," a young store clerk replied. "I'll go get him!" he added before rushing down an aisle, and towards the rear of the store.

"Will!" cried Mike, before grabbing Will, and pulling him into a warm embrace. "I'm so glad you're okay," he said.

Lucas and Max were there too. "Byers," said Lucas. "Where the hell have you been?"

"Lucas," Will uttered, looking around at the crowd that had gathered. "What are you all doing here?"

"Good question," said Steve, stepping into the store, and sealing the

doors behind him by jamming his spiked bat between the handles. "Those things are everywhere," he assured them, "and it's gonna take more than all of us to stop them."

As he comforted his mother, Jonathan said, "Steve's right. What are we gonna do?"

Will turned to Malcolm, and said, "What do you think, Malcolm?"

"Wait a minute," said Dustin, his eyes wide. "You're Malcolm?"

Malcolm nodded awkwardly, and a smile spread across Dustin's face. He approached Malcolm, and gave him a warm, friendly hug. "Holy shit, am I glad to meet you!"

"So, what Bogart said was true?" asked Max.

"No way," Lucas denied, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. "He's just a kid."

"Hey, Malcolm just took on a demo-dog, and he turned it into dust with his mind" Will explained. "Plus, he saved my Mom."

Mike stepped forward, then asked, "Is that true?"

The crowd fell silent, and Malcolm nodded.

"Then, kid, you're our only hope," said Steve, gazing out at the mist, and the monsters that lurked within it.

In the distance, a demo-dog howled.

"What happens now?" asked Nancy, eyebrows furrowed.

"Now," said Dustin, "we fight."

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32. Chapter 4: The Shapeshifter (Part 8)

5th December, 1985

"Did he say anything?" asked Hopper.

"Not a word, Chief," Callahan replied from the other side of the radio. "You know, he kinda gives me the creeps."

Hopper sighed. They had spent all afternoon questioning Alvin down at Hawkins Police Station, but he had given them nothing. Hopper thumbed the walkie-talkie, then asked, "Where's Powell?"

"On his way back from Bloomington," Callahan explained. "The boy's father wasn't there. His house was empty."

"Dammit," Hopper cursed. The boy's father, Kenny, a crop farmer in Bloomington, had sounded like a nut-case, but he was the closest thing the boy had to a family.

"Where are you?" Callahan asked, and Hopper heard him taking a sip of coffee from the other side.

"I'm responding to the 187 on Cornwallis and Kerley," he explained, before pulling up at the side of the road.

"Why not just send Radcliffe or Langley?" asked Callahan, confused. "It's probably just another bear attack."

Hopper thumbed the walkie-talkie, and gazed into the woods. "I don't think so," he said, before hanging up.

Across the street, Hopper noticed the sign for Cornwallis and Kerley. He sighed. This had been the spot where Will Byers had gone missing two years ago. "Mirkwood," he uttered.

Suddenly, a loud knock caused Hopper to jump in his seat.

"Hey there, Chief!" yelled an old man, who stood outside the Chevy, his eyes bulging with excitement at the sight of Chief Jim Hopper.

"Nigel," uttered Hopper, before stepping out of the Chevy, and tucking his magnum into its holster.

Nigel was a withered old man with thinning white hair sprouting from his head. He wore dungarees, and a pair of wellington boots, and clutched a bolt-action rifle.

"Over here," Nigel instructed, leading Hopper into the woods.

"Can you tell me what happened, exactly?" asked Hopper.

"So, it's about two o'clock in the afternoon, and I'm out here huntin' with Buck Nelson," Nigel explains. "You know Buck, don't ya? Old fella? Kinda funny lookin'?"

"Go on," Hopper encouraged, following Nigel through the woods.

"Well, I got me a white-tailed deer in my sights," Nigel recalls. "My finger's on the trigger, and I'm about to bag him, but then I hear Buck wailing and crying from across the woods." Nigel shook his head. "Naturally, the deer ran off, so I run over to Buck to see what he's found," he explained, before coming to a halt.

"And?" asked Hopper, his eyes wide with curiosity. "What did he find?"

"Well, I ain't an expert, Chief," said Nigel, before stepping aside to reveal a stiff, bloody corpse, buried beneath a pile of leaves, "but, I'd say that's a dead body."

Hopper fell to his knees, and began to brush away the leaves covering the corpse, revealing wounds where a set of claws had sunk deep into the flesh.

"Another bear attack, I reckon," Nigel suggested. "Same thing happened to Bob Newby about a year ago, remember?"

Hopper noticed that the corpse was wearing a Hawaiian shirt, which was soaked in blood. Reaching for his hands, he heard a clink, and noticed that the corpse's hands were cuffed.

"Well, shit," Nigel cursed. "You reckon this guy was a fugitive?"

Hopper's heart was beginning to race. He brushed the leaves covering the corpse's face, and recognized him almost instantly.

"Alvin," he uttered, his eyes wide with fear.

"You know this fella?" asked Nigel, scratching his head.

Hopper rose to his feet, grabbed Nigel's shoulder. "Nigel, get home to your family, and take them out of Hawkins," he instructed. "The whole town is in danger."

Hopper rushed out of the woods, and back to his Chevy.

"What the matters, Chief?" Nigel yelled. "You mean, there really *is* a bear on the loose?"

After pulling up in front of Hawkins Police Station, Hopper climbed out of the Chevy, and approached the front steps, his magnum in his hand.

Along the way, Hopper heard the sounds of distant cries and yells, which stopped him in his tracks.

Looking over his shoulder, he noticed a thick wave of mist tumbling down the street, consuming Downtown Hawkins.

The distant screams faded into silence, and Hopper too was consumed by the mist. Looking up, he noticed the American flag billowing in the wind above the station, until the mist became so thick, that the flag disappeared.

Suddenly, Hopper heard a loud slam from inside the station. He raised his gun, slowly climbed the steps, and entered Hawkins Police Station, his heart racing in his chest.

Inside, there was darkness. Lights flickered, and slime dripped from the ceiling. Ash-like spores danced through the air, and thick, pulsing tendrils had spread across the floors, and climbed the walls.

Steeping into the office, Hoper noticed Officer Radcliffe and Officer Langley laying dead on the floor, covered in blood and slime.

Beverley, the temporary secretary, also lay dead at her desk, blood leaking from a deep tear in her throat.

"Shit," Hopper cursed, approaching Officer Langley's corpse. The young man had been torn apart, deep claw marks spread across his torso. Officer Radcliffe, meanwhile, had been completely disemboweled, his guts strewn across the office floor.

A trail of blood led to the holding cells. His gun cocked, Hopper followed the trail, and entered the holding cells.

Alvin's cell had been torn apart from the inside, the metal bars bent and twisted.

"Chief," a weak voice called.

Callahan was sat, his back to the wall, claspings a revolver, blood trickling from his mouth.

Hopper approached Callahan, and fell to his knees. "Phil," he said, clutching his shoulder. "It's alright. You're alright."

Callahan shook his head. "I don't think so, Chief," he uttered. "It got me pretty good."

Looking down, Hopper noticed the tear in Callahan's uniform, where a claw mark spread across his entire torso, digging deep into his flesh.

"Chief," he uttered, grasping onto Hopper's shoulder for dear life. "Don't let it hurt my family," he pleaded.

"I won't," Hopper assured him. "I'm gonna kill the son of a bitch," he said. "I promise."

Callahan grinned, blood trickling from out of his mouth. "I believe you," he uttered.

Callahan's grip loosened, and his arm became limp. His eyes stared blankly ahead.

Still clutching his shoulder, Hopper wept softly.

Back in the office, Hopper heard a creak. He grabbed his magnum, and rose to his feet, following the trail of blood back into the bull pen, where a shadowy figure stood in the doorway to the reception, with a weapon drawn.

"Drop it!" Hopper yelled, his magnum aimed at the figure.

"Chief!" a familiar voice yelled. From out of the shadows stepped Powell, who seemed relieved to see a familiar face. He lowered his gun, and said, "What the hell happened here?"

"Don't move," Hopper warned, still aiming his gun at Powell. "Not another step."

"Chief, what the hell are you doing?" Powell asked, confused. "It's me!"

"Prove it," said Hopper, his weapon still drawn on Powell, and his finger hovering over the trigger.

"What?" asked Powell.

"My daughter," uttered Hopper. "What was her name?"

"Chief, have you lost your-"

"WHAT WAS HER NAME!?"

"Sarah!" yelled Powell, raising his hands in defense. "Her name was Sarah!"

Hopper sighed, then lowered his weapon. "I'm sorry," he said. "I just had to be sure."

Powell approached Hopper, then said, "Chief, what the hell happened here?"

"It broke loose," said Hopper. "And it killed everyone. Radcliffe, Langley, even Callahan."

Powell's eyes widened in shock. "Phil," he uttered. "He's dead?"

"And the thing that killed him is on the loose," Hopper explained, before marching towards the exit, still clutching his magnum.

"Wait, where are you going?" asked Powell, following Hopper to the exit.

"To find the only person who can stop it," answered Hopper, before swinging the front doors open, and exiting Hawkins Police Station.

Outside, the mist had consumed the entirety of Downtown Hawkins.

"Well, shit," Powell cursed, before clutching his walkie-talkie. "I'm calling for backup."

Hopper snatched the walkie-talkie out of Powell's hand and said, "There is no backup! Didn't you see that graveyard back there? We're on our own."

"You really think we can do this alone?" asked Powell.

"You're not alone," said a voice from deep within the mist.

Hopper spun around, pointing his magnum in every direction. "Who's there?" he yelled.

Suddenly, a shadowy figure appeared from out of the mist: a young girl, wearing a tight-fitted black jumpsuit, and a pair of fingerless gloves, her hair slicked back. She smiled warmly at the sight of Hopper.

"Jane," uttered Hopper. "Where the hell have you been?"

"Looking for the Shapeshifter," Jane explained. "It's real, Hopper," she assured him, "and it's here."

"I know," Hopper replied. "I saw it." Hopper holstered his weapon, and approached Jane. "And I think I know how to stop it," he said, reaching out to clutch Jane's shoulder. "Let me help you," he said.

"No," Jane replied, firmly, stepping back from Hopper.

"What?" Hopper asked, confused.

Jane shook her head. "No," she repeated, louder this time. "I trusted you," she admitted. "But, you let the bad men hurt me."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Hopper asked.

"Hawkins Lab," Jane snapped. "You told them where I was hiding. You told him. Papa."

"Who told you that?" asked Hopper, confused.

"So, it's true?" asked Jane, her eyes welling.

Hopper sighed, and bowed his head. "Jane," he uttered, "I was trying to save your friends."

"You lied to me!" Jane yelled.

"I saved you!" Hopper replied. "I gave you a home, and I protected you!" Hopper took a deep breath, trying to remain calm. "If it hadn't have been for me, you'd be all alone."

"I am alone," Jane replied. "I've always been alone."

Hopper shook his head. "You're wrong," he said. "There's a boy," he uttered, kneeling down to Jane's height. "He's from Hawkins Lab, and he's just like you."

Jane was confused. "Like me?" she asked.

"Yeah," Hopper assured her, smiling warmly. "He's special, like you."

Jane's eyes narrowed. "Where is he?" she asked.

"He's close," Hopper promised. "We can go and find him... Together... If that's what you want."

Jane was conflicted. "I..."

Suddenly, Hopper heard the screeching of tires, and the roar of an engine.

From out of the mist, a white van appeared, its headlights shining directly at them.

The van pulled up behind Jane. Bold, blue text on the side of the van read: HAWKINS POWER AND LIGHT.

Hopper's heart sank. He turned to Jane, whose eyes were welling with tears.

"I'm sorry," Jane uttered, her voice trembling.

The van slid open, and half a dozen soldiers climbed out, wielding rifles, and yelling demands at Hopper and Powell.

"On your knees!" one of the soldiers yelled to Hopper, pointing a rifle in his face.

Behind him, Hopper could hear Powell resist. A soldier hit him with the butt of his rifle, and knocked him to the ground.

Hopper fell to his knees, placed his magnum on the ground, and put his hands in the air.

From out of the passenger seat climbed a man in a suit, with a head of white hair, and a large scar across his face. He approached Hopper, and stood over him, his hands in his pockets.

"Where's the boy?" Dr. Brenner asked.

To be continued in Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist! Coming soon...

Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

33. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 1)

Previously on *Stranger Things* 3: After a mysterious mist rolls in town, the gang find themselves trapped in Bradley's Big Buy, where they await to do battle with the horrors of the Upside Down. Meanwhile, the Shapeshifter is on the loose, and Hopper is reunited with Jane, who is assisting Dr. Brenner with the search of one of his runaway test subjects: a young boy named Malcolm, who may be the key to stopping the Shapeshifter, and saving Hawkins.

5th December, 1985

A pack of demo-dogs howled in chorus.

Dustin climbed onto a checkout counter, and thumbed his walkie-talkie. "Okay, losers, get ready," he said. "Shit's about to hit the fan."

Steve spun the spiked bat in his hands, his eyes fixated on the glass doors. Next to him, Nancy cocked her gun.

"Where did you get that?" Steve asked her.

"I stole it from a State Trooper," Nancy replied.

Steve smiled, then said, "Who are you and what have you done with Nancy Wheeler?"

"They're coming!" yelled Lucas, who sat atop one of the aisles, clutching his binoculars.

"Where?" asked Max, from the bottom of the aisle.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash, and a demo-dog burst through one of the nearby windows.

Landing on the supermarket floor, the demo-dog roared, baring its razor-sharp teeth.

"Shit!" Steve yelled, and the demo-dog turned towards him.

"Steve, watch out!" Dustin cried.

The demo-dog raced towards Steve, who clutched his spiked bat, lifting it into the air.

The demo-dog leapt towards him, and Steve swung the bat, which came crashing into the demo-dog, knocking it to the ground.

The demo-dog lifted its head off the ground, and roared one last time at Steve, before Nancy pointed her gun down its throat, and fired a bullet through its head, killing the beast.

Another demo-dog burst through the hole in the window, landing right in front of Dustin.

The beast roared, and Dustin cried.

The demo-dog climbed onto the checkout counter, and Dustin fell onto his behind, desperately trying to crawl away.

"Somebody help!" Dustin cried, but the demo-dog was on top of him now, bearing its teeth, saliva dripping from out of its mouth and onto his face.

Suddenly, there was a loud explosion, and the demo-dog was knocked off its feet.

Across from him, Dustin noticed Robert, the store manager, clutching a smoking shotgun.

"You okay, Henderson?" asked Robert.

Dustin, who still shook with fear, his face covered in blood and saliva, nodded his head.

"There are more of them!" yelled Lucas, pointing towards the mist.

Shadowy figures began to emerge from out of the mist, followed by a chorus of howls.

"You've gotta be kidding me," Dustin uttered.

"Hurry up!" Will yelled.

He clutched Malcolm's hand, dragging his friend across the store room.

They could hear the sounds of gunshots, roars, and cries for help, coming from the supermarket floor.

Suddenly, Malcolm stopped in his tracks. He looked over his shoulder, his eyes wide with fear.

"C'mon, Malcolm, we have to go!" Will pleaded.

"They need my help," Malcolm uttered.

On the other side of the wall, the screams and cries became louder.

"It's too dangerous," Will reminded him. "Bogart said that you're the only one that can stop the Shapeshifter!"

"I don't care what that crazy old man said," Malcolm said firmly. "I'm tired of running!"

Will grabbed Malcolm's shoulder, and spun him around. "Malcolm," he uttered, gazing deeply into his eyes, "I can't lose you."

Malcolm's eyebrows became furrowed.

Will stuttered, embarrassed. "I mean... We... I..."

His voice trailed off, and Will's heart raced. He pulled Malcolm towards him, and kissed him softly on the lips.

The kiss was short and gentle, and when they separated, they both seemed as confused as they were frightened.

Before long, Malcolm, clutched Will's collar, and pulled him towards him, kissing him on the lips. This kiss was longer, and the two boys held each other tight throughout every second of it.

When their lips parted, the two boys chuckled nervously.

"C'mon," Will uttered, before clutching Malcolm's hand.

"It's gonna be okay," Jonathan reassured his mother. "You're gonna be okay."

"Jonathan," uttered Joyce in a weak voice as she caressed his cheek.

"What happened?" asked Dr. Tamblyn, appearing behind Jonathan, clutching a first aid kit. Beside him stood Gordie, the pimpled store clerk.

"One of those... things," Jonathan replied, his voice trembling. "It got her."

"Let me take a look," said Dr. Tamblyn, moving Jonathan aside.

Joyce clutched her belly, blood spilling through her fingers.

Gently, the doctor took Joyce's hand, and revealed the gash in her belly.

"Gordie," the doctor uttered in a calm, controlled voice. "I need you to bring me a bottle of whiskey, and some glue."

"Whiskey and glue," the young man echoed. "Got it," he said, before rushing off.

"Jonathan, I need you to take off your shirt."

"My shirt?" Jonathan said, confused.

"Now," said the doctor, firmly.

Jonathan slipped off his shirt, leaving only the tank top vest he wore over his skinny frame, and handed it to the doctor.

The doctor shook his head.

"We need to apply direct pressure to the wound, or else your mother's going to lose too much blood," the doctor explained. "Push down with the base of your palm, but not too hard. If she's broken any bones, you'll only move them out of place."

Jonathan wrapped his shirt around his hand, and began to apply pressure to Joyce's abdomen.

Suddenly, a loud roar startled Jonathan.

Down the aisle, there stood a large dog-like creature, saliva dripping from out of its mouth.

"Shit," the doctor uttered, as the demo-dog stepped towards them.

"What do we do now?" asked Jonathan, panicking.

Dr. Tamblyn gulped, before rising to his feet. He reached into the back of his pants, only to remember that his gun had been stolen the red-headed girl.

Behind him, Dr. Tamblyn heard a large battle cry, and Gordie came charging past him, swinging a sledgehammer under his arms, and knocking the demo-dog into the air.

It landed with a thud a few meters down the aisle.

Gordie panted, and wiped sweat from his brow, before turning to them. "Sorry, I took so long," he said. "I took a bit of a detour. The hardware aisle," he explained, before dropping the sledgehammer. "Is everyone okay?" he asked.

Jonathan nodded, and Dr. Tamblyn smiled warmly.

"Good work, kid," he said. "Did you get what I asked?"

From out of his pockets, Gordie pulled a bottle of whiskey, and a small tube of glue. "Will this do?" he asked, handing them to Dr. Tamblyn.

"Perfectly," Dr. Tamblyn replied, patting him on the shoulder.

The doctor returned to Joyce's side, then said, "Now, before we can close your wound, we're gonna need to dry it. But, before we can do that, we need to make sure that your wound is clean."

"How do we do that?" asked Gordie.

"Jonathan," Dr. Tamblyn uttered, a look of dread upon his face, "I'm gonna need you to hold your mother down for me."

Joyce's eyes widened with fear, as Dr. Tamblyn twisted open the bottle of whiskey. The smell of alcohol burned. "Oh, God," she cried.

"It's okay," Jonathan assured her, holding his mother. "It's gonna be okay."

Dr. Tamblyn pulled a cloth out of his pocket, and poured a drop of whiskey onto it. "I'm not going to lie to you," he said to Joyce, "this is gonna hurt."

"It's alright," Joyce uttered weakly. "I won't scream," she promised. "I won't scream."

Dr. Tamblyn held the cloth near, his eyes darting between Jonathan and Joyce. "You ready?" he asked.

Jonathan nodded, his eyes welled with tears.

Joyce nodded, her eyes closed.

Dr. Tamblyn pressed the cloth to her wound.

Joyce screamed.

She had the demo-dog in her sights.

Her finger hovered over the trigger.

The demo-dog leapt onto Steve, knocking him to the ground.

The spiked bat fell to the ground, and rolled towards Max's feet.

"You gonna use that thing, or what?" asked a voice by her side.

Kenny had appeared, a frustrated look upon his face.

Max stuttered, and Kenny rolled his eyes.

"Give it here," he said, snatching the revolver out of Max's hands.

With one hand, Kenny aimed the gun at the demo-dog, which was now on top of Steve, drooling all over his face.

Kenny squeezed the trigger. The bullet scraped the demo-dog, causing it to turn towards them, and roar in pain.

"Uh oh," uttered Kenny.

The demo-dog charged towards them, screeching.

"I think you pissed it off," Max observed.

Max noticed the spiked bat at her feet, and grabbed it, the demo-dog leaping towards her. She swung the bat under her arms, digging the nails into its head.

The demo-dog screeched in pain, before falling to the ground, its body limp and void of life.

Steve climbed to his feet, luck to be alive, and approached Max. "Nice job, red," he said, before holding out his hand.

Max kept ahold of the bat. "Try to stay on your feet, flyboy," she said.

Kenny chuckled. Noticing this, Max added, "And maybe you ought to work on your aim."

Kenny's laughter faded, and Max marched away, still clutching the spiked bat.

The demo-dog marched towards him. Slowly, its mouth spread open, letting out a hungry, guttural growl.

Mike continued to step back. He was alone and unarmed, and was beginning to fear that this might be the end.

Suddenly, he bumped into the aisle behind him. He spun around, and noticed hammers, mallets and axes hanging off the racks along the hardware aisle.

Without hesitation, Mike grabbed one of the axes, and spun around.

The demo-dog had leapt towards him, its razor sharp claws ready to tear him apart.

Mike slammed the axe into the demo-dog's skull, sinking it deep into the creature's flesh.

The demo-dog whimpered, and fell on its side.

Still clutching onto the axe, Mike went tumbling down onto the floor, landing next to the demo-dog's carcass.

Mike yanked the axe out of the demo-dog's skull, and rose to his feet.

"Is everybody alright?" asked Dustin, still sat atop the checkout counter, where Robert stood, clutching his shotgun.

"Just peachy, kid," Kenny answered sarcastically. He stood beside Steve. A dead demo-dog lay at their feet.

"Lucas?" Nancy called, clutching a revolver. "What do you see?"

Sat atop one of the aisles, Lucas gazed through his binoculars. "I don't see anything."

In the distance, another pack of demo-dogs howled in unison, sending chills down Mike's spine.

"Did you guys hear that?" asked Max, standing at the end of the aisle, clutching Steve's spiked bat.

"How many of these things are there?" asked Mr. Clarke, appearing behind Mike.

"Alright, ladies and germs," said Dustin. "Time for round two."

"Are you crazy?" asked Steve. "We're no match for a whole army!"

"The boy's right," said Kenny. "We can't win this fight alone."

"What choice do we have?" asked Mike. "For all we know, we're the only one's left!"

Suddenly, a noise outside startled the group into silence.

Gunshots.

"What the hell is going on out there?" asked Max.

There were more gunshots, and Mike heard the sound of dogs whimpering.

"Maybe we're not alone, after all," Nancy suggested.

Eventually, the gunfire ceased, and the whimpers faded into silence.

"You see anything, Lucas?" asked Dustin.

Lucas gazed through his binoculars, and saw shadowy figures emerging from out of the mist, wearing body armor, helmets, eye wear, and assault webbing, and clutching rifles.

"Soldiers" said Lucas. "About a half a dozen of them."

"Well, shit," said Kenny, smiling. "Sounds like the cavalry's arrived!"

Upon closer inspection, Lucas noticed a man in a police uniform being dragged alongside one of the soldiers.

Lucas lowered the binoculars, a dreadful look across his face. "Hopper?" he uttered.

Suddenly, the front doors burst open, startling the entire group.

From out of the mist and into the store, stepped a short, shadowy figure.

They stepped into the store, and suddenly, Mike realized that he recognized their soft face, and their big eyes.

"El?" Mike uttered, his heart beginning to race.

There in the doorway stood Jane. She wore a tight-fitted black jumpsuit, and a pair of fingerless gloves, her hair slicked back. Her nose was bleeding.

Noticing Mike, Jane smiled.

Mike's heart sank, however, when Jane was joined by a tall man in a suit, with a head of white hair, and a large scar across his face.

"Bad men," uttered Mike.

Soldiers began pouring into the store, waving their guns around, and barking commands at them to put their hands up, and get down on their knees.

One of the soldiers dragged Chief Jim Hopper into the store, and threw him to the ground. Officer Powell was also dragged inside, having seemingly been taken captive by Hawkins Lab too.

"Jane, what's going on?" asked Mike, confused.

"Mike," Jane said in a calm voice, "we know he's here."

"What are you talking about?" asked Mike.

"Malcolm," she replied. "We need his help."

Kenny stepped forward. "Your looking for my boy?" he asked.

"That's right, Kenny," said Dr. Brenner, approaching him with a warm and welcoming smile. "As a matter of fact, we need his help."

"I thought you said my boy was dead, Doc?" Kenny reminded him.

"Yes, well, new information has come to light, and we believe that your son may well be somewhere in this very building," Dr. Brenner revealed, before offering Kenny his hand. "Will you help us find him?"

Kenny looked down at his hand, then back up at Dr. Brenner, his eyes narrowed. "Go fuck yourself, Doc," he said, before throwing his fist into his face, the punch knocking Dr. Brenner to the floor.

Almost immediately, Kenny was grabbed by a couple of soldiers, and was wrestled to the ground.

Dr. Brenner climbed onto his feet. "Seize control of the building, and round up the survivors!" he yelled to his soldiers, who began pointing

their weapons at them all.

"Jane," Dr. Brenner said, "find that boy."

"Yes, Papa," Jane agreed, before turning to Mike. She only watched as one of the soldiers grabbed him, and began dragging him down one of the aisles.

Mike kicked and screamed all the way.

Next time on *Stranger Things 3*: Trapped inside Bradley's Big Buy, the gang come up with a plan to escape the clutches of Hawkins Lab.

Hope you all enjoyed the first part of what is sure to be a thrilling chapter! Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

34. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 2)

Previously on *Stranger Things 3*: Hawkins Lab have seized control of Bradley's Big Buy, where the gang have been taking refuge from the monsters in the mist. With the help of Eleven, Dr. Brenner searches for Malcolm, the telepath, who is hiding somewhere in the supermarket. Believing that he is the key to finding the Shapeshifter, Dr. Brenner is determined to find the boy.

5th December, 1985

"Is she going to be okay?" asked Hopper, clutching Joyce's hand.

"We were able to stop the bleeding," Dr. Tamblyn explained, crouching by his side, "but, I'm afraid that the wound has become infected."

"So, what do we do *now*?" asked Jonathan, who sat beside his mother, his arm wrapped around her.

"There's nothing we *can* do," Dr. Tamblyn assured him. "Not without antibiotics."

"There's a pharmacy about a half mile from here," Hopper remembered. "They'll have whatever you need."

At that moment, one of the soldiers marched past, clutching an assault rifle. He paused, turned to Hopper, his eyes narrowed in suspicion, then continued to march down the aisle.

"Brenner's soldiers have this entire building on lockdown," Dr. Tamblyn reminded him. "There's no way of getting to that pharmacy without his permission."

"You work for Hawkins Lab," said Jonathan. "Can't you talk to him?"

"I can count on one hand the amount of times I've ever actually *spoken* to Brenner," Dr. Tamblyn revealed, before sighing. "But, I'll do my best."

Suddenly, a familiar voice said, "Richard, may I have a moment alone with you?"

Dr. Brenner had appeared. He was a tall, thin man, with a head of white hair, and a large scar across his face, which he'd gained after being mauled by a creature from another dimension two years ago.

"Of course," said Dr. Tamblyn, before rising to his feet. "Make sure she drinks plenty of water," he instructed Hopper. "I'll be back."

Walking down the aisle, side-by-side with Dr. Tamblyn, Dr. Brenner asked, "Do you think that Mrs. Byers will survive?"

"Not without the proper medicine," Dr. Tamblyn assured him. "There's a pharmacy not too far from here, if we could just send a couple of soldiers-"

"Nobody leaves," Dr. Brenner interrupted. "Not until we find the boy."

"Sir, if I may," Dr. Tamblyn began, "are you even sure that the boy is *here*?"

"Eleven was able to trace his location to Mulberry Street," Dr. Brenner explained. "But, the boy's powers are *growing*. He's since been able to *block* Eleven from tracking him."

Dr. Tamblyn was surprised. He could remember when Malcolm's powers were limited to making tennis balls bounce. Over the past few days, it appeared that his powers had grown tremendously. "Fascinating," he uttered.

Dr. Brenner's eyes narrowed in suspicion. "Richard," he said, "if you knew where the boy was, you would tell me, wouldn't you?"

Dr. Tamblyn chuckled nervously. "Of course," he assured him.

Dr. Brenner smiled. "Good," he said. "Because, that boy is the key to locating the Shapeshifter," Dr. Brenner explained.

Dr. Tamblyn was confused. "I'm not sure I understand what you mean, sir," he admitted.

Dr. Brenner sighed. "This creature has the ability to... *conceal* itself... to take different *forms*," he explained. "It can keep its *true* identity a secret, but not to the boy."

"Of course," said Dr. Tamblyn. "It can't hide from a *telepath*," he realized.

"Precisely," said Dr. Brenner, smiling. "Only the *boy* can help us catch it."

Dr. Tamblyn wore a concerned look. "*Catch* it?"

"Well, of course," said Dr. Brenner. "Imagine how much of an asset the Shapeshifter could be to us," he explained, his eyes bulging in excitement. "If we can learn to control it, I can't think of a more perfect tool for spying on the Russians."

It was at that moment that Dr. Tamblyn realized that he was witnessing the birth of the apocalyptic future that he had only just returned from.

And that only he could stop it.

Dr. Tamblyn marched across the store room, determined to find Kenny.

"What's up, Doc?" asked a sinister voice from nearby.

Kenny leaned against the roller shutter, his arms folded.

"Kenny," Dr. Tamblyn uttered. "I need to talk to you," he said, approaching Kenny.

Stepping out of the shadows, Kenny watched Dr. Tamblyn, his eyes narrowed. "What the hell do you want?"

"It's about your son," Dr. Tamblyn explained. "Kenny, I need you to tell me where he is," he pleaded. "We have to protect him!"

Kenny chuckled. "How stupid do you think I am, Doc?" he asked. "Even if I did know where Malcolm was hiding, I'd never tell you," he

assured Dr. Tamblyn.

Dr. Tamblyn sighed, before stepping closer to Kenny. "Kenny," he uttered, "I'm not like Brenner." Dr. Tamblyn's were wide, as he pleaded with Kenny. "I want to help," he assured him. "Please, trust me."

Kenny chuckled again. "Alright," he uttered.

Suddenly, Kenny's fist came swooping towards his face, cracking him across the jaw, and sending him tumbling to the floor.

Dr. Tamblyn's vision became blurred. His ears were ringing. Suddenly, Kenny grabbed him by the collar, and lifted him up. "Did you really think I wouldn't remember?" he asked angrily.

Dr. Tamblyn stuttered, blood dripping from a busted lip. "Kenny," he uttered weakly, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You took my boy!" Kenny yelled, gripping Dr. Tamblyn's collar. "You ruined my life!"

Kenny drove another fist into Dr. Tamblyn's face, knocking him flat to the ground.

Huffing and puffing with anger, Kenny marched towards the roller shutter, and began to yank the chain.

The roller shutter began to slide open, revealing nothing but the thick mist outside, which shrouded Hawkins.

"You don't deserve to be in here," said Kenny, stepping towards Dr. Tamblyn. "You should be out there," he said, pointing, "with the rest of the monsters!"

Kenny grabbed Dr. Tamblyn by the collar, then lifted him up.

"Kenny, please," Dr. Tamblyn begged. "Malcolm is our only hope."

"What the hell are you talking about?" asked Kenny, his grip beginning to loosen.

"It's true," Dr. Tamblyn uttered weakly. "We've seen how this all ends," he explained, "and your son is the only one who can stop it."

Kenny let go of Dr. Tamblyn, and stepped back. "I don't know where Malcolm is," he promised.

"I believe you," said Dr. Tamblyn.

"Then what do you want from me?" asked Kenny, frustrated.

"I need your help," Dr. Tamblyn replied. "There's a woman out there who's dying," he explained, "and without the right medical supplies, she's not gonna make it."

"Why are you telling me this?" asked Kenny.

"There's a pharmacy about a half mile from here," Dr. Tamblyn explained. "If I distract Dr. Brenner, under cover of the night, you, and maybe a handful of others, should be able to sneak out of here."

Kenny had been stunned into silence. "I don't understand," he said. "What makes you think that I'd help you?"

Dr. Tamblyn considered the question, then smiled faintly. "Because, it's the right thing to do."

Kenny paused, then asked, "Where do I start?"

"Chief Jim Hopper," Dr. Tamblyn replied. "He'll be able to help you."

Kenny sighed, then nodded. As he walked past Dr. Tamblyn, he said, "We'll be waiting for your signal, Doc."

As the sound of Kenny's footsteps faded into silence, Dr. Tamblyn approached the roller shutter, and looked out at the misty landscape.

Dr. Tamblyn only hoped that he hadn't acted too late, and that there was still a chance to save Mrs. Byers.

From within the mist, Dr. Tamblyn heard a deep and guttural growl.

"Hello?" he cried, but there was no response.

Suddenly, a thick, pink tentacle reached out from within the mist, and wrapped itself around Dr. Tamblyn's leg.

Dr. Tamblyn cried, then tried to shake the tentacle loose, but its grip only tightened. The tentacle dripped with slime, and its grip became so tight that Dr. Tamblyn leg snapped under its weight, causing him to wail in pain.

Dr. Tamblyn fell to the floor, and his glasses slid off his nose. He cried and screamed as he felt himself being dragged away.

Soon, his vision became shrouded by the mist.

Until, finally, there was darkness.

Hope you all enjoyed the first part of what is sure to be a thrilling chapter! Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

PS: La Melodie asked the question, and, yes, Dr. Tamblyn is based on Dr. Jacoby from the show Twin Peaks! He shares his name with Russ Tamblyn, who played Dr. Jacoby on the show. Well spotted!

-G

35. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 3)

Previously on *Stranger Things* 3: After their search for Malcolm leads them to Bradley's Big Buy, Dr. Brenner and his men seize control of the supermarket. However, when Kenny confronts Dr. Tamblyn, the man responsible for his son's kidnapping, he offers to help the gang to escape.

5th December, 1985

"Jim," she uttered weakly, her voice trembling.

"What is it?" asked Hopper, as Joyce's blood-soaked hands clutched desperately at his collar.

"*Will*," she said, her eyes welling with tears. "If I don't make it-

"That *is not* going to happen," Hopper interrupted.

"But... *if*," said Joyce. "I need you to promise me that you'll take care of him."

"Of course I will," Hopper promised her, wiping hot tears from her cheeks, "and you'll be right there with me, because you're going to be *okay*."

Joyce smiled.

"Uh, Chief," said a voice from behind.

Hopper turned around to find Kenny standing over him, an anxious look upon his face.

"We need to talk," said Kenny.

They hid behind a shelf, stocked full of Twinkies.

"It's happening tonight," Kenny explained, his voice hushed to a whisper. "Doc said he'd give us a signal, then he'll keep Brenner

distracted, whilst you and I make a break for it."

"What about the guards?" asked Hopper.

"I only counted about a half a dozen," Kenny assured him. "Even if we do run into trouble, we should be able to overpower one soldier."

"But not two or three," said Hopper. "We're gonna need backup."

"Any ideas?" asked Kenny.

"A few," said Hopper, eyes narrowed in concentration. "We'll also need someone to be on the lookout," he said. "Someone who can navigate us to the front of the store without running into any of Brenner's soldiers."

Kenny nodded. "I'm on it," he promised, before grabbing a Twinkie from off of the shelf, ripping the wrapping paper apart, and shoving it into his mouth.

Hopper nodded, then turned his back on Kenny, and returned to Joyce's side.

Kenny spun around, only to be faced with a young boy, with black, mop-like hair, and wide, sad eyes.

"Mike," he uttered, hoping he'd remembered the boy's name correctly. "What are you doing here?"

Mike stuttered. "I just wanted to say..." he began, shuffling awkwardly as his voice trailed off. "I thought that, what you did back there, standing up to Brenner like that..." Mike looked up at Kenny. "I thought that was a really awesome thing to do."

Kenny sniggered, then said, "Well, it didn't *feel* awesome when Brenner's goons pinned me to the floor and kicked the crap outta me." He turned to Mike, then smiled. "But, thanks anyway, kid," he said, before turning his back on Mike.

"I forgive you," said Mike, causing Kenny to stop in his tracks.

"You what?" asked Kenny, turning around, his eyebrows furrowed.

"I forgive you," Mike repeated, "for turning me and El over to Dr. Brenner." Mike stepped closer, then said, "I know you were just trying to help your son."

"I still am," said Kenny, smiling. He turned to Mike, then asked, "You know where he is, don't you?"

Awkwardly, Mike nodded.

"But you can't tell me," Kenny added, "can you?"

Mike shook his head. "I'm sorry," he uttered.

Kenny smiled. "That's okay, kid," he said.

Mike turned his back on Kenny, and was about to disappear around the corner, when Kenny yelled, "Mike!"

Mike turned around. "What?" he asked, confused.

Kenny sighed. "I might need your help," he said.

"I don't get it," admitted Gordie, scratching his head.

"Which part don't you get?" asked Dustin, sat atop a crate of Pabst Blue Ribbon.

"So, the old man, Bogart, he sent you back to change the future, right?" asked Gordie.

"Right," said Dustin.

"So, what happens if you do?" asked Gordie, confused. "If you change the future, what happens to Bogart?"

"I don't know, I guess he just... disappears," Dustin suggested.

"Disappears?" Gordie echoed in disbelief.

"Yeah," said Dustin. "You know, like *Back to the Future*."

Having grown tired of their conversation, Lucas yelled, "Dustin, for

once, would you please shut up?"

Surprised, Dustin turned to Lucas, his eyes narrowed. "What crawled up your ass?" he asked.

"What's happening right now, this is *real*," he reminded Dustin, his eyes wide with fear. "Every body in Hawkins is in danger, and what are we doing?" he asked. "We're just sitting here, twiddling our thumbs, and talking about a load of mumbo-jumbo."

"It's not mumbo-jumbo," Dustin assured him. "Bogart gave me a mission: to find Malcolm, and to keep him safe," he reminded Lucas.

"And how exactly is that supposed to help us?" asked Lucas, his temper boiling. "My family are out there, Dustin," he reminded him, his voice trembling, and his eyes welling with tears. "My little sister," he uttered.

Max squeezed Lucas hand, and smiled.

Noticing this, Dustin's eyes narrowed. "You've seen what happens to Hawkins if we don't stop the Shapeshifter," he said, remembering the atom bomb that Bogart had shown them back in the Upside Down. "You and your girlfriend might think that he's just a crazy old man, but I believe him, and I'm not gonna let him down," said Dustin, before turning his back on Lucas, and marching down the aisle.

"Dustin, wait," said Lucas, regrettably.

Dustin stopped, then spur around. "And for the record," he said, "you're not the only one who's worried about their family."

Dustin stormed off, leaving Lucas to reflect on what he'd told him.

"It's alright," Max reassured him. "He'll come around."

"So, can you two time-travel too?" asked Gordie, still confused.

"Shut up, Gordie," Lucas insisted.

Suddenly, Mike appeared. "Lucas," he uttered, still catching his breath from rushing across the supermarket, "I need your help."

"What's going on?" asked Lucas.

"We're getting out of here," said Mike, smiling, "that's what's going on."

"No, I don't know anything, I swear!" yelled Robert, kicking and screaming.

Steve Harrington watched as a couple of soldiers dragged Robert, the store manager, down the frozen aisle, and into the store room, where his muffled cries soon faded into silence.

"They're looking for Malcolm," a familiar voice explained.

Behind him, Dustin approached, and took a seat next to Steve.

"And what happens when they find him?" he asked.

Dustin turned to him, his eyes narrowed. "They won't," he assured Steve.

"You sound pretty sure about that," said Steve, shaking his head. "As for me, I'm not so convin-"

Steve came to a pause mid-sentence. Beside him, he noticed Dustin gently weeping, his head in his hands.

This took Steve by surprise.

"Hey, hey, what's the matter?" he asked, clutching Dustin's shoulder. "Look, we're gonna be okay," he promised Dustin, "you know that, right?"

"It's not that," Dustin assured him, sniffing as he wiped tears from his eyes. "You remember the girl I told you about? When we were walking on the railroad tracks?" he asked.

"Yeah, I remember," said Steve. They had been setting a trap for Dustin's escaped demo-dog when Dustin had confided in Steve about his red-headed crush. "Max, right?"

Dustin nodded, then said, "Well, I know you told me not to fall in love with her and all, but..."

Steve sighed. "Dammit," he cursed. "Let me guess," he said. "She's got a boyfriend, right?"

Once again, Dustin nodded, his head bowed.

"Look, you're just gonna have to... move on," Steve advised. "I know that, right now, you might think that this girl is the whole word, but trust me..."

Down the aisle, Steve noticed Nancy, sitting next to Jonathan, smiling warmly as she clutched his hand.

Turning back to Dustin, Steve struggled to remember his point. "What was I talking about?" he asked.

"You were telling me that I have to move on, but I don't wanna move on," Dustin explained, his eyes wide in desperation. "I really like this girl," he admitted, a defeated look on his face. "Don't you think I should tell her how I feel?"

Steve sighed, before looking over at Nancy.

Suddenly, Steve rose to his feet, and marched down the aisle, leaving Dustin behind.

"Hey, where the hell are you going?" Dustin yelled. "Steve!"

Nancy was sitting beside Jonathan, who'd wrapped his arms around her.

Standing over the couple, Steve cleared his throat.

"Steve," Nancy uttered, her eyes wide with surprise. "What is it?"

"Nance," said Steve, "can we talk?"

Nancy shared an awkward look with Jonathan, who shrugged, before turning back to Steve.

"Please?" Steve begged sheepishly.

The loading bay was a cold, dark, and eerie space, but it allowed Steve and Nancy to escape the prying eyes of Dr. Brenner and his soldiers.

"Is she going to be okay?" asked Steve, walking alongside Nancy.

"I'm not sure," Nancy admitted, an anxious look on her face. "Jonathan said that, if his Mom's wounds aren't treated properly, then..." Nancy's voice trailed off.

Steve attempted to change the subject. "What about your Mom?" he asked. "And the rest of your family, too? Do you think they're okay?"

"I don't know," Nancy admitted. "I hope so," she said, her voice trembling. She cleared her throat, then asked, "What about you? When was the last time you spoke to your father?"

"A couple of days ago now," Steve remembered, before smiling widely. He came to a halt, then said, "Actually, he asked me to take on the auto-shop."

Nancy's eyes widened in surprise. "He did?" she asked, smiling in amazement. "Are you gonna do it?"

Steve shook his head. "I dunno," he admitted. "I'm not exactly sure that it's what I want to do with the rest of my life."

Nancy stepped closer to him, her eyebrows furrowed curiously. "Then, what do you want to do with the rest of your life?" she asked.

Steve catch himself gazing into Nancy's blue eyes, and he smiled. "I guess I haven't figured that part out yet," he admitted. "Although, maybe taking on the auto shop wouldn't be such a bad idea, after all," he said. "I'd be making good money. Really good money," he assured Nancy. "I'd probably be able to afford my own place, which could be nice, if I could find some body to share it with, that is," he said, smiling at Nancy.

Nancy rolled her eyes. "Steve," she uttered regretfully, "I'm with

Jonathan now."

"Nance, I hate to break it to you, but that loser can't look after you," Steve assured her. "I mean, does Byers even have a job?"

"I don't care about a job! I don't care about any of that!" Nancy assured him. She shook her head, then said, "You wouldn't understand."

Steve wore a pained expression. "Nancy," he uttered, "I still love you."

Nancy sighed, before grabbing Steve's hand. "Steve," she uttered.

A loud crash from across the loading bay interrupted her.

"What the hell was that?" asked Steve.

Looking down, Nancy noticed that she was still clutching on to Steve's hand. "Sorry," she uttered, as she let go of his hand, careful to avoid eye contact with Steve.

Suddenly, there was a loud electronic hum.

Above them, the fluorescent lights burst into life.

"The power's back," Nancy noticed, gazing at the lights above her.

From across the loading bay, Gordie appeared. He was wiping his greasy hands with a rag, a wide smile across his pimpled face.

"Hey, I got the backup generator up and running!" Gordie yelled proudly from across the loading bay.

However, Gordie's smile soon twisted into a look of terror, and his whole body began to tremble in fear. "Oh my god," he uttered. "OH MY GOD!" he yelled, pointing behind Steve and Nancy.

Turning around, Steve discovered the root of Gordie's fear.

Behind them lay Robert, the store manager. His eyes were wide and vacant, and his jaw hung open. His torso had been torn apart, with blood and guts spilling out of his chest.

"Jesus," Steve uttered, his eyes narrowed in disgust. "Brenner's soldiers really did a number on him, huh?"

Nancy shook her head. "No," she said, "the soldiers didn't do this."

Steve was confused. "Then who did?" he asked.

Nancy turned to Steve, her eyes wide with fear.

"The Shapeshifter," she uttered.

Next time on *Stranger Things 3*: Tensions rise within Bradley's Big Buy when the gang discover that the Shapeshifter is on the loose, and could be any one of them! Meanwhile, Mike is questioned by Dr. Brenner, and comes face to face with Eleven.

Hope you all enjoyed the first part of what is sure to be a thrilling chapter! Be sure to leave a REVIEW, and make sure you FOLLOW/FAVORITE so that you never miss a chapter.

-G

36. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 4)

5th December, 1985

Previously on *Stranger Things* 3: After Hawkins Lab seize control of Bradley's Big Buy in search of their escaped test subject, the gang come up with a plan to escape. However, they soon discover that the Shapeshifter is on the loose, hiding somewhere in the supermarket.

Dr. Brenner climbed atop a milk crate, and the crowd's whispers hushed to a silence.

The soldiers formed a barrier between them and Dr. Brenner, who stood with his hands on his hips, his piercing eyes flicking between each member of the crowd.

The crowd shifted and shuffled, and Mike found himself being squashed between Lucas and Max.

"We have reason to believe that an interdimensional predatory creature is on the loose in this supermarket," explained Dr. Brenner. "It has already taken one life, and I have no doubt that it intends to kill again."

"Bullshit," yelled Kenny, stepping forward. "If there was a monster runnin' around, somebody would've seen something!"

An uproar from the crowd followed, and many amongst them began to hurtle accusations towards Dr. Brenner, accusing him and his soldiers of killing Robert themselves.

"Perhaps, they already have," Dr. Brenner suggested, which silenced the crowd. "You see, this creature has the ability to

change its physical form at will," he explained. "This is a murderous, violent creature," he reminded the crowd in a cold, cutting voice, "and it could be any one of you."

Mike, Lucas and Max shared an awkward glance.

"We will continue to hold interviews with everyone in this supermarket, until the Shapeshifter is found," Dr. Brenner explained, before stepping down, and disappearing down one of the aisles.

Once again, an uproar from the crowd followed, as people cried, scorned, and questioned the doctor.

"Do you think it's really true?" asked Lucas, his eyes wide with fear. "Do you think the Shapeshifter's really here?"

"No way," Max argued. "The last time any of us saw Robert, he was being dragged away by Brenner's goons," she reminded them. "They've killed people before, so, who's to say they didn't kill Robert too?"

"Because, Robert wasn't just killed," a familiar voice interrupted. "He was completely torn apart."

From out of the crowd stepped Nancy and Steve, approaching Mike, Lucas and Max.

"What happened?" asked Mike, relieved to see his sister.

"We found Robert's body," Steve explained.

"It was the Shapeshifter," Nancy assured them. "It ripped him to shreds," she explained, her voice trembling. "Dr. Tamblyn's missing too."

Mike had been stunned into silence. His heart was pounding, and he was running out of options.

"Look, you guys aren't gonna like this," Max began, "but maybe Brenner's right."

"What are you talking about?" asked Mike.

"Maybe Malcolm is the only one who can stop the Shapeshifter," Max explained. "Maybe he should be helping Brenner, not hiding from him."

"You don't know what Brenner's capable of," Nancy assured Max, her

eyes narrowed. "He stole Malcolm from his home when he was just a little boy," she reminded her. "If he finds him again, he will never let him go. We can't let him win."

"Nancy, look around you," said Lucas. "Brenner's already won!"

"Not yet," said Mike, firmly. "We're getting out of here, remember?"

"You are?" asked Steve. "What's the plan?"

"Wheeler!" a nearby voice yelled, suddenly.

Turning around, Mike was faced with Gordie, the store clerk, stood between a couple of armed soldiers.

"What do you want, O'Connell?" asked Steve.

"Dr. Brenner wants to see you," Gordie explained to Mike. "He has some questions."

"That's not going to happen," Nancy assured him, before stepping in front of Mike. "I'm not letting that creep anywhere near my little brother."

"Me neither," Lucas added, before also taking up a spot in front of Mike, his wrist rocket in his hand. "If you want Mike, then you're gonna have to go through us."

Suddenly, the soldiers cocked their guns, and aimed them at the gang.

"Wait a second," Mike urged, before shoving Nancy and Lucas from out of his way. "It's okay," he assured them. "I have to go."

Mike stepped forward. Peering over his shoulder, he whispered, "If I'm not back, don't wait for me. Just go."

They nodded, and Mike followed Gordie and the soldiers down the aisle, and into the manager's office.

"You know, I grew up in a small town not unlike Hawkins," said Dr.

Brenner, leaning on the desk in the manager's office, his blue, piercing eyes fixed on Mike.

"Goodsprings, it was called," Dr. Brenner continued, smiling warmly. "About an hour's drive from Spokane, Washington." He chuckled, then added, "The cherry pie was to die for."

"Why are you telling me this?" Mike snapped, eyes narrowed in distrust towards the doctor.

Dr. Brenner's smile faded. "Because, I loved my home town, and I'm sure that you love yours too," he said, taking a seat opposite Mike. "Which is why I need you to understand that... all this... everything I do, I do to protect towns like Hawkins."

"I don't understand, " Mike admitted.

Dr. Brenner sighed, then said, "You see, Michael, there are people out there who do not share our love for perfectly innocent towns such as Hawkins, or Goodsprings, or for the whole of the United States, for that matter." He leaned forward, then added, "To them, our very way of life is an insult, and something they would seek to destroy."

Mike was confused. He gazed out the window, which offered nothing beyond a glimpse at the thick, eerie mist that had settled upon Hawkins. Within it moved the shapes of all sorts of murderous, violent creatures.

"No, I'm not talking about the monsters in the mist," said Dr. Brenner in a calm, gentle voice. "I'm talking about the ones on the other side of the ocean."

"The Russians?" asked Mike. "What have they got to do with any of this?"

"Michael, for the last thirty years, I've dedicated my life to staying one step ahead of the Russians," Dr. Brenner explained. "MKUltra, Hawkins Lab - our name may have changed over the years, but our mission has always remained the same: to protect this country against any threat imaginable."

"What about the Shapeshifter?" asked Mike. "Isn't that a threat?"

"Perhaps," Dr. Brenner uttered softly. "Or, it could be a valuable asset."

Mike's heart sank as he came to a shocking realization. "The Shapeshifter," he uttered, his voice trembling. "You wanna use it as a weapon!"

"Not a weapon, Michael," Dr. Brenner denied. "Think of it as... reconnaissance," he insisted, smiling cruelly. "You have no idea what we could learn from such a creature."

"You're insane," Mike assured him.

Dr. Brenner's smile faded. "Where's the boy, Michael?" he asked, in a cold, cutting voice.

Dr. Brenner sighed, then rubbed his forehead. "I can see that I'm wasting my time," he said, before rising to his feet. He approached the door, then added, "You leave me no other choice."

Dr. Brenner swung open the door, and to Mike's surprise, Jane stood in the doorway.

"Jane?" Mike uttered, confused.

At the sound of her birth name, Jane smiled faintly.

"That boy is our key to finding the Shapeshifter," Dr. Brenner explained, before turning to Jane. "Do what you have to do," he insisted coldly.

Mike's heart raced. He was glued to his seat.

Jane approached, wearing a tight-fitted jumpsuit, and a pair of fingerless gloves, her hair slicked back.

As she stepped in front of him, Mike noticed tears in Jane's eyes.

"Mike," Jane uttered. "Just tell me where he is," she pleaded.

Mike's eyes were wide with horror. "What if I don't?" he asked, dreading the answer.

Jane wore a pained look. She turned to Dr. Brenner, who nodded in encouragement, before turning back to Mike. "I don't want to hurt you," she assured him.

Mike's eyes narrowed. "You already have," he replied.

Jane sighed, before raising her hand towards Mike, harnessing the telekinetic energy in her palm.

Mike winced. This was going to hurt.

Tears streamed down Jane's cheeks. She cried, before lowering her hand. "I can't," she said.

Behind her, Dr. Brenner sighed. "I was hoping it wouldn't come to this," he uttered.

Suddenly, Dr. Brenner drew a gun, and aimed it at Jane's head.

"Tell me where he is!" Brenner yelled, his eyes bulging with rage.

"Papa!" Jane yelled, as Brenner pressed the gun to her head.

"Stop it!" Mike cried. "Please, I'll tell you where he is!"

Dr. Brenner turned to Mike, and eyebrow raised. "Well?" he said.

"He's here!," Mike finally admitted, "in the supermarket."

"Where?" Dr. Brenner asked, still clutching the gun.

"I don't know," Mike promised. "We all just told them to hide."

Dr. Brenner lowered the gun, his eyes narrowed. "Them?" he echoed curiously.

Mike stammered. "I... Uh..." he began, his voice trailing off.

"Michael," Dr. Brenner uttered softly, "who is Malcolm with?"

Mike's heart was pounding in his chest. He continued to stutter. "I... He..."

"Papa," Jane interrupted assertively, stepping in-between the two of them. "Let him go," she demanded.

Dr. Brenner sighed. His face twisted into a smile, and he nodded in agreement, before turning to Mike. "Return to your friends, Michael," he instructed, "and, please, do try to behave."

Mike nodded, before rising to his feet, and approaching the door.

Mike swung open the door, then turned to Jane, who offered him a gentle but warm smile, tears still trickling down her cheeks.

Mike stepped out of the office, and slammed the door behind him, never once looking back.

Mike's footsteps echoed into silence.

Jane clenched her fist, and the air snatched Papa's gun out of his hand, before lowering it into Jane's palm.

Looking down at the gun, Jane said, "You shouldn't have done that," before turning to face Papa. "You shouldn't have tricked him like that."

Papa only chuckled. "Don't tell me that you've come to care for that boy," he said, his smile fading. "Those people out there cannot help you, Eleven-"

"Stop calling me that," Jane interrupted, her eyes narrowed. "That's not my name."

Papa sighed. "Five," he uttered. "Can you find him?"

"Only if you promise me something," said Jane.

"What's that?" asked Papa.

"Promise me you won't hurt him," Jane demanded.

Papa chuckled. "Eleven," he said, "I would never hurt the boy. I've spent years searching for him."

"Then why do you need this?" asked Jane, clutching the gun, and shoving it in Papa's face.

Papa snatched the gun out of Jane's hand. He ejected the magazine, and poured a pile of darts into his hand. "Do you know what these are?" he asked Jane, shoving his hand into her face.

Jane shook her head.

"They're tranquilizer darts," Papa explained. "They're sedatives." Papa reloaded the gun, and handed it to Jane. "I was never going to hurt any body, Eleven."

Jane grasped the gun, noticing its light weight.

Suddenly, she came to a shocking realization.

"The Shapeshifter," she uttered. "You're not trying to kill it," he realized. "You're trying to capture it."

Papa was confused. "Well, of course," he said. "Do you have any idea how much we could learn from this creature?"

Jane was aghast. "It's killed people" she reminded Papa, her voice trembling.

"And it will kill again, unless we can learn to control it," said Papa, pacing up and down the office.

"It's a wild animal," Jane assured him. "You can't control it!"

"You're right," said Papa, "I can't." He turned to Jane, then said, "But, maybe you can."

Jane shook her head. Her hands shaking, she lifted the tranquilizer gun, and aimed it at Papa.

Papa's eyes widened in fear. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Stopping you from making a terrible mistake," said Jane, her finger on the trigger.

Papa raised his hands. "Eleven-"

Jane squeezed the trigger, firing a dart into Papa's neck.

Papa yanked the dart out of his neck, a shocked expression on his face.

"I told you not to call me that," said Jane.

Papa became drowsy. His eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he fell to the floor.

Jane dropped the gun.

She knew what she had to do.

Next time on *Stranger Things 3*: The gang attempt their escape from Bradley's Big Buy. Meanwhile, Malcolm and Will are found, and the Shapeshifter finally reveals itself.

-G

37. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 5)

5th December, 1985

Previously on *Stranger Things 3*: After Hawkins Lab seize control of Bradley's Big Buy in search of their escaped test subject, the gang come up with a plan to escape. However, they soon discover that the Shapeshifter is on the loose, hiding somewhere in the supermarket.

"You're all clear," said Lucas, whispering through the walkie-talkie.

"Copy that," said Hopper. He lowered his walkie-talkie, then said, "C'mon, let's go," ushering Kenny to follow him down the aisle.

Noticing Lucas perched atop one of the aisles across the supermarket, his binoculars around his neck, Hopper nodded.

"That kid better not let us down," Kenny whispered. "He's our eyes and ears out here."

"Don't worry," said Hopper. "Lucas won't let us down."

"I hope you're right," Kenny replied. "I dunno what's got Brenner so spooked, but he's ordered his men to shoot first, and ask questions later."

They came to the edge of the aisle, and Hopper's walkie-talkie crackled. "Stop," urged Lucas.

Hopper thumbed the walkie-talkie. "What is it?" he asked.

"3 o'clock," warned Lucas. "Two soldiers, coming your way."

Hopper gulped, and lowered his walkie-talkie. "I've got an idea," he told Kenny.

"What is it?" asked Kenny, his eyes wide with fear.

Suddenly, Hopper grabbed Kenny collar, swung him around, and

threw him onto the floor.

Kenny slid against the ceramic tiles, landing at the soldiers' feet.

"What the hell?" said one of the soldiers, raising his gun at Kenny.

Hopper approached Kenny, then turned to the soldiers. He pointed at Kenny, then said, "It's him! He's the Shapeshifter!"

The soldiers shared a concerned look, then turned to Kenny, their weapons armed.

"Don't move," the other soldier ordered, pointing his gun in Kenny's face. "We've got you now."

Hopper turned to Kenny, and winked.

Placing himself behind the soldiers, Hopper stomped the back of their knee, and pulled their head up. He wrapped his arm around their neck, and clamped his hand over his mouth.

"Hey!" the other soldier yelled, pointing his gun at Hopper.

Kenny kicked the soldier in the shin, causing him to cry out in pain. He rose to his feet, grabbed his gun, and wrestled it out of his hands.

Meanwhile, Hopper continued to choke the soldier, until his entire body became limp, and Hopper let him fall to the floor.

Kenny snatched the gun out of the other soldier's hands, and pressed the trigger.

The gunshot was soft and clean, and Kenny noticed a dart fire into the soldier's neck.

The soldier became drowsy. His eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he fell to the floor, landing with a thud.

Beside him, Hopper caught his breath, and put his hand on Kenny's shoulder.

Kenny turned to Hopper. "You could have warned me," he said.

Hopper snatched the gun from out of Kenny's hands, and ejected the magazine. He poured a pile of darts into his hand. "Sedatives," he uttered.

"I don't understand," said Kenny. "Why are Brenner's men using tranquilizers?"

"Because, they're not trying to kill the Shapeshifter," Hopper realised. "They're trying to capture it."

"Hopper," Lucas' voice cried from the other side of the walkie-talkie. "There are more of them!"

Lucas was right. Hopper could hear voices.

Hopper looked down at the two soldiers at their feet. "We're gonna have to move these bodies," he said.

"Wait a minute," said Kenny, before turning to Hopper. "This time, I've got an idea."

"She needs to go to a hospital!" Jonathan yelled.

"She needs to be quiet," said the soldier, his eyes narrowed.

"Please," Nancy begged, cradling Joyce in her arms, "tell Dr. Brenner, if she isn't taken to a hospital, she's going to die."

From down the aisle, another soldier approached, clutching his gun.

"What's going on here?" the approaching soldier asked.

Jonathan rose to his feet, his fists clenched. "I wanna speak to Dr. Brenner," he demanded.

"Nobody's going anywhere," the soldier assured him, pointing his gun at Jonathan.

"Jonathan, *don't!*" Mike yelled.

"What are you gonna do?" asked Jonathan, coaxing the soldiers. "Are

you gonna *shoot* me?"

"Jonathan!" Nancy cried.

The soldiers exchanged a concerned look. One of them nodded, and the other cocked his gun.

Suddenly, Jonathan was shoved out of the line of fire.

Steve Harrington threw his fist into one of the soldiers' face, breaking his nose, and squirting blood across his face.

The soldier fell to the floor, where he cried in pain as he clutched at his broken nose.

"Son of a bitch," the other soldier cursed, before wringing Steve's neck.

Steve was choking. He tried to wriggle free, but the soldier was stronger than he was.

Steve heard a thwip, and noticed a dart in the soldier's neck.

"I'm... gonna... kill..." the soldier slurred. His eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he came crashing to the floor.

Steve caught his breath. Down the aisle, another soldier approached.

"You okay?" the soldier asked, approaching Steve.

Steve was still panting. He nodded, and the soldier pulled off his headgear.

"Good," said Hopper, smiling. "Now, let's get the hell outta here."

Across the supermarket, Dustin could hear the desperate cries of his friends.

He began to run, but from around the corner, one of Dr. Brenner's soldiers appeared.

Dustin's trainers squeaked as he skidded to a halt.

"You!" the soldier yelled. "What are you doing wandering around at this time of night?"

Dustin panicked. "I... Uh..."

The soldier reached for his firearm.

Behind him, a figure appeared from around the corner of the aisle.

Dustin recognized his curly hair, and his oddly colored sunglasses - one lens blue, the other red.

"Dr. Tamblyn!" Dustin cried. He'd never been so happy to see the doctor.

The soldier spun around, his eyes wide with amazement when he recognized the doctor. "Doc," he uttered. "You're not dead!"

"Not dead," Dr. Tamblyn uttered in a soft, quiet voice.

Dustin's eyes narrowed in confusion. Something was definitely wrong.

Dr. Tamblyn's arm began to drip with thick slime.

"You alright, Doc?" the soldier asked, confused.

Dr. Tamblyn's arm began to twist, slowly transforming into scaly, slimy flesh, with a razor-sharp point.

It was the Shapeshifter.

"I knew it!" Dustin yelled. "I always knew it!"

The Shapeshifter drove its point through the soldier, piercing his heart, and digging all the way through his flesh, until he was able to lift the soldier off of his feet and into the air.

"Hey, kid!" a voice from behind Dustin yelled.

Behind him, another soldier rushed down the aisle, armed with a shotgun.

"Get down!" the soldier yelled.

Dustin dropped to the floor, and a loud explosion followed.

He heard the creature screech in pain, as it was knocked off its feet, and landed with a thud.

The soldier removed his headgear, and approached Dustin, before offering him his hand.

"You alright, kid?" asked Kenny, lifting Dustin to the ground.

"Yeah, I think so," said Dustin, before a chilling guttural roar caused him to look over his shoulder.

There it was. The Shapeshifter. Standing only feet across from them. Its mouth spread open like flower petals, bearing its razor sharp teeth.

"I'm gonna need a bigger gun," Kenny realized.

Next time: ?

-G

38. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 6)

Previously on **Stranger Things 3**: Whilst attempting a daring escape from the clutches of Hawkins Lab, Kenny comes face to face with the Shapeshifter, whilst Eleven, aware that Malcolm is their only hope at stopping it, betrays Dr. Brenner, and sets on a mission to save her friends.

"I don't know how much longer we can stay in here," said Will, his voice trembling in the cold.

It was about thirty degrees Fahrenheit in the meat locker, and Will's lips were beginning to freeze.

Beside him, Malcolm shivered, blood trickling from his nose, and his face covered in frost.

"You okay?" asked Will, clutching Malcolm's arm.

"They're trying to get inside my head," said Malcolm, wiping his nose. "I don't think I can keep them out for much longer."

Will clutched Malcolm's hand, and squeezed it gently. "Maybe it's about time we let them find us."

Malcolm was surprised to hear this. "What?" he asked, his eyes wide with fear.

"I never should have abandoned my friends," Will admitted, his eyes welling with tears. He turned to Malcolm, then said, "I was just so scared of losing you."

Malcolm smiled, then said, "You don't have to worry." He squeezed Will's hand. "I'm not going anywhere," he promised.

Suddenly, there was a loud rumble, and the sound of metal screeching pierced Will's ears.

The walls shook, and there was a loud as the large steel door to the meat locker was forced off its hinges, and landed by their feet.

Jane stepped into the room, wearing a tight-fitted jumpsuit, and a pair of fingerless gloves, her hair slicked back.

"Jane," Will uttered. "It's you."

"*You're* the one who's been trying to get inside my head," Malcolm yelled.

The boys rose to their feet, and Jane approached. "Malcolm," she said, "we need your help."

"What makes you think *I* can help you?" asked Malcolm.

Jane sighed, then rolled up her sleeve, revealing the numbers 011 tattooed on her forearm.

Will and Malcolm shared an anxious look, and Will nodded. Malcolm then rolled up his sleeve, revealing the numbers 005 on his forearm.

Jane smiled as she rolled down her sleeves. "It's okay," she assured him. "You don't have to be afraid anymore."

"What's going on out there?" asked Will. "I thought I heard gunshots!"

"The Shapeshifter," uttered Jane. "It's here."

Jane turned to Malcolm, who shivered in the cold. "And I think you're the only one who can stop it."

Kenny peered over the counter, clutching a shotgun.

"Do you see it?" asked Dustin, crouched beside Kenny, his voice hushed to a whisper.

"Nope," said Kenny, before turning to Dustin. "C'mon, we've gotta warn the others."

They slid out from behind the counter, and slowly crept across the supermarket.

Behind him, Dustin whispered, "How do we even know the

Shapeshifter when we see it?"

"We don't," Kenny admitted, still clutching his shotgun.

Suddenly, Hopper appeared from around the corner, still clad in the stolen soldier's uniform. Taken by surprise, he pointed a pistol at Kenny.

"Woah, take it easy, Chief," said Kenny, lowering his shotgun. "It's me," he assured him. "It's Kenny."

Behind Hopper, Steve clasped his spiked bat, holding it over his shoulder. "How do we know he's telling the truth?" he asked, his eyes narrowed in suspicion. "It could be a disguise!"

To Steve's right stood Gordie, who pointed at Kenny and yelled, "A disguise!"

"Hey, what about me, asshole?" yelled a complacent Dustin. "Am I a disguise, too?"

"Nope, that's Dustin alright," said Mike, who stood beside Steve, armed with an axe.

"What about you, smartass?" Kenny yelled at Steve. "How do I know that that *thing* hasn't figured out how to use a hairdryer?"

"Take it easy," urged Hopper. "Are we calm?" he asked.

Kenny nodded, and Steve lowered his spiked bat.

"Calm," uttered Gordie.

"We're running out of time," Hopper reminded them. "*Joyce* is running out of time, and if we don't get to a Pharmacy soon, then Will and Jonathan are gonna lose their mother."

"That's not going to happen," Kenny promised him. "The exit's clear, so let's move it!"

"We're not leaving while that *thing* is on the loose!" Hopper assured him.

"Well, good luck finding it!" yelled Kenny, his patience wearing incredibly thin.

Suddenly, the doors to the store room crashed open, and a bunch of teenagers rushed out onto the supermarket floor.

Leading the group was a young boy in a pink shirt, and dark, brown hair combed to one side.

The boy pointed towards Steve, and yelled, "There it is! The Shapeshifter!"

They turned to Steve, whose eyes had widened in fear. "What?" he asked, smiling nervously. "I'm not... I'm me! I'm *Steve*!"

They turned back to the boy, who cried, "Behind! BEHIND!"

The group turned around. Behind Steve, Gordie had backed into the corner, where his body had begun to twitch and twist.

His fingers dripped with slime.

Gordie's mouth stretched open, letting out a deep, haunting gargle as his skin began to transform into a scaly, slimy exterior.

Gordie retreated into the shadows.

There was a loud roar.

From out of the shadows, the Shapeshifter emerged. Its mouth spread open, and it bared its razor-sharp teeth as it let out a chilling roar.

Kenny clutched his shotgun when, suddenly, a teenaged girl dressed in a jumpsuit, with dark, slicked back hair, stepping in front of him.

The girl raised her hand to the Shapeshifter, as if she was going to tame it like a wild beast.

Above them, the light began to flicker erratically.

The Shapeshifter stepped towards her, and let out a loud roar that made the entire supermarket rattle, before swinging at the girl, and

knocking her off her feet.

"Jane!" Hopper cried, as she slid across the floor.

Hopper rushed towards Jane, as the Shapeshifter marched towards them, saliva dripping from out of its mouth.

Kenny's finger was about to squeeze the trigger of his shotgun, when the young boy stepped in front of him, also raising a hand to the Shapeshifter.

Above them the lights began to flicker once again.

"No," the boy uttered, focused on the Shapeshifter, who came to a sudden halt.

"NO!" the boy cried, reaching out towards the Shapeshifter.

Across the supermarket, sparks of electricity jumped as the lights above them burned out, and the ground beneath them shook.

The Shapeshifter roared, and the boy screamed.

The Shapeshifter's scales began to peel off its body, lifting into the air, and slowly disintegrating, until the monster had completely vanished until, finally, there was silence.

The boy fell to his knees, huffing and puffing.

Across the supermarket, Hopper held Jane, who re-awoke in his arms.

"You did good, kid," he assured her, and Jane smiled.

In front of him, the boy turned around, and Kenny lowered his shotgun.

His heart sank, he recognised the boy.

"Malcolm," he uttered, his voice trembling.

The boy froze. His eyes widened, and welled with tears. "Dad?"

"It's me, son," said Kenny, his face twisting into his smile as his voice broke. "It's your Dad."

Malcolm didn't hesitate. He wrapped his arms around Kenny, who embraced his son.

"Found you," said Kenny, his arms wrapped tightly around his son.

Next time on **Stranger Things 3**: Hopper and Steve prepare to venture out into the mist, whilst Dustin starts a mission of his own, and a familiar face returns with some devastating news.

Hope you enjoyed this new chapter! Sorry for the delay, but we're nearing the end of Chapter 5 now. I hope that you'll stick around for Chapter 6, and the exciting conclusion of Stranger Things 3!

-G

39. Chapter 5: Monsters in the Mist (Part 7)

Previously on **Stranger Things 3**: Whilst attempting a daring escape from the clutches of Hawkins Lab, the gang come face to face with the Shapeshifter. After teaming up with Eleven, Malcolm is able to destroy the monster once and for all, and is finally reunited with his father, Kenny.

She found Hopper in the checkout aisles, loading shells into a shotgun.

Jane was silent. She tapped Hopper on the shoulder, and he spun around.

"Oh, it's you," he uttered, before turning back around. "What do you want, kid?"

"I... They said..." Jane stammered, her voice trembling. "You're leaving?"

"That's right," Hopper said firmly before pumping the loaded shotgun, and turning to Jane. Noticing her wide, worried eyes, he sighed and said, "Joyce is hurt *bad*. Without medicine from the pharmacy, she's not going to make it."

"Let me come with you," Jane urged.

"No," Hopper replied firmly. He sighed again, then softened his voice when he said, "I need you *here*, with everyone else. They're gonna need someone to protect them."

Jane smiled. "I can do that."

"I know," said Hopper, his tired face twisting into a smile. His smile faded when he said, "Look, kid, there's something you have to understand..."

"Me first," Jane insisted.

"Well, alright," Hopper agreed.

There was a pause, until Jane said, "My whole life, I've only ever been looking for one thing. And, finally, I found it, until Papa came back. When he told me about the Shapeshifter, and Malcolm, and all of the bad things that were about to happen, I decided to help him, not because I wanted to, but because I wanted to protect the thing that I'd spent so much time looking for, and finally found."

"And what's that?" asked Hopper.

Jane smiled. "Family."

Hopper smiled, and put his hands gently on Jane's shoulders. "Brenner's been trying to tear us apart, and although what he said was true, you have to know that everything I've ever done I've done to *protect* you and your friends."

"I know," replied Jane, before wrapping her arms around Hopper. "Be safe," she told him.

"You too," Hopper replied, squeezing Jane tightly.

"You don't have to do this, Steve," Nancy assured him, clutching his hand.

Steve sighed. "Yeah, I do," he said, squeezing Nancy's hand.

"What you said before... These feelings that you have for me..." Nancy's voice trailed off, and she stared up at Steve. "Just... don't go doing something you'll regret because of me."

Steve chuckled, and shook his head. "Nance, this isn't about you," he assured her. "For once," he added. "I'm doing this for me."

Hopper appeared behind Steve, clutching a shotgun. "You ready, kid?" he asked.

Nancy's eyes welled with tears. She kissed Steve on the cheek, and squeezed his hand, before saying, "Good luck."

Steve smiled. "I'll see you," he promised, before turning his back on Nancy, and following Hopper down the aisle.

"Wait! Steve!" a familiar voice yelled.

Steve turned around, and down the aisle came Jonathan Byers running towards him.

"What do you want, Byers?" asked Steve.

"To thank you," said Jonathan, catching his breath. "If you hadn't have stood up to those guards... Well, I might not still be alive."

Steve looked down at the floor. "Hey, don't worry about it," he said, before turning his back on Jonathan.

"You're a good guy, Steve," said Jonathan.

Steve paused, then turned around, a puzzled look on his face. "What did you say to me?"

"I'm sorry I didn't see it before," Jonathan apologized. "I guess, at first, I thought you were just another bully," he admitted. "And, even after everything you've done... protecting Nancy... the boys... me... I still couldn't see you as anything beyond that."

"Hey, don't worry about it," said Steve.

Jonathan looked up at Steve, and offered him his hand. "Just... make sure you come back, okay?"

Steve smiled, and shook Jonathan's hand. "Whatever you say, Byers."

Steve followed Hopper down the aisle, and everyone watched as they walked through the double-doors, and towards the mist, until they disappeared into the fog.

Dustin sat alone, perched atop a milk crate, anxiously twiddling his thumbs.

"You okay?" asked a familiar voice.

From down the aisle, Mike approached. He took a seat next to Dustin, planting his buttocks on the tiled floor.

"I'm thinking," Dustin assured him, staring directly ahead.

"What are you thinking, Dustin?" asked Mike.

"I'm thinking... Dr. Tamblyn was willing to risk everything to help us escape," Dustin recalled.

"He was a pretty cool dude," Mike agreed.

"My Mom sure seemed to think so," said Dustin, smiling.

"I'm sorry that the Shapeshifter got him," said Mike, "but that's all over now. The Shapeshifter's gone."

Dustin turned to Mike, and said, "But, maybe the Doc isn't."

"What do you mean?" asked Mike, his eyes narrowed in confusion.

"All I'm saying is, nobody ever found a body," Dustin reminded him. "The Shapeshifter must have dragged him into the mist... Maybe back to its lair."

"You think he's still alive?" asked Mike.

"Maybe," said Dustin, "but not for long."

Mike was concerned. He jumped in surprise when Dustin suddenly clutched his shoulder.

"You asked me what I was thinking, Mike," Dustin reminded him. "I'm thinking we have to go out into the mist."

"I'm thinking we should rescue Dr. Tamblyn."

"It's gonna be okay," Jonathan assured his mother, clutching her shoulder. "They'll be back soon, and then we're gonna get you fixed up."

"Jonathan," Joyce uttered, weakly reaching out towards him. "My boy," she said, grasping his hand.

From further down the aisle, Kenny watched as Jonathan's eyes

welled with tears.

"Dad?" said a familiar voice, as someone tugged lightly at the back of his jacket.

Kenny turned around and found his son, Malcolm, accompanied by a group of teenagers, including Mike and Jane.

"I want you to meet my friends," said Malcolm, before gesturing towards the gang, one by one. "This is Mike, Jane, Dustin, Lucas, and Max," he said, with each of the teenagers offering Kenny a polite nod or a slight wave.

"And this is Will," said Malcolm, before proudly presenting a young, soft-skinned boy with brown hair in a bowl cut, wearing a plaid shirt tucked into his jeans. "If it hadn't have been for him, I'd be back in a padded cell by now," Malcolm assured his father, sharing a joyful glance with Will.

Kenny smiled, and patted Will on the shoulder. "I can't thank you enough," he uttered. "Not any of you," he added, extending his gratitude to the entire gang. "And, if they weren't too busy worrying like hell about you all, I'm sure your parents would be very proud," he said, smiling warmly. "If there's ever anything I can do for you kids, please, just holler."

The teenagers shared curious glances.

"Well," the curly-haired boy named Dustin uttered, "now that you mention it."

"NO WAY!" Kenny yelled, marching down the aisle.

"Mr. Clarke, wait!" Mike cried, as the teenagers rushed after him.

"Ain't nobody going out there again!" Kenny assured them, before pointing out the window, towards the thick, eerie mist that had consumed Hawkins. "Do you have any idea what's out there?"

"Do you?" asked Jane firmly, which stunned Kenny into silence.

The gang smiled, their eyes narrowed curiously.

"Well- I mean, no," he admitted clumsily. "But, I know it's not safe."

Lucas chuckled. "Like it's any safer in here," he said.

Suddenly, Dustin stepped forward, his eyes wide and fixed on Kenny. "Look, Mr. Clarke-

"It's Kenny," he interrupted.

"Kenny," said Dustin. "Dr. Tamblyn was willing to put everything on the line to help us. If it weren't for him, you might never have gotten to see your son again."

"If it weren't for him, I would never have lost my son in the first place," Kenny reminded him, his fists curled in rage.

"Dad, please," Malcolm begged, "we have to do this."

Kenny sighed. "I don't know, son..."

"If not for Doc Tamblyn, do it for us," said Mike.

There was a pause, and Kenny stepped towards the window, before leaning against the glass, and gazing out towards the mist.

"Kids, if we go out there, there's no way of knowing what in the hell is waiting for us in that mist," he reminded them.

Suddenly, the mist parted, and a large, shadowy figure emerged from within it, landing with a thud against the other side of the glass.

"Let me in! Please!" the man begged as he banged against the window. He was dressed in rags, a bandana wrapped around a head of platinum hair.

"Bogart!" Dustin yelled, shifting past Kenny. "What's going on? Where did you come from?"

"Dustin!" the old man yelled. "Whatever you've done, it didn't work! The Upside Down, the Resistance, it all still exists!"

"That's impossible!" Dustin assured him. "We destroyed the Shapeshifter. Your future shouldn't even exist anymore."

"In a few hours, it won't," said Bogart ominously. "And neither will yours!"

"What the hell are you talking about?" asked Dustin.

"The bomb," Bogart reminded him. "It's unstable."

"And unless we close the Gate," Bogart explained, "both our worlds will be torn to shreds."

Next time on **Stranger Things 3**: The gang attempt a daring rescue from within the Upside Down.

Hope you enjoyed this new chapter! Sorry for the delay, but we're nearing the end of Chapter 5 now. I hope that you'll stick around for Chapter 6, and the exciting conclusion of Stranger Things 3!

-G

40. UPDATE!

Hi everyone,

Thank you all for reading **Stranger Things 3**. It's now been so long since my last update, that the new season is now almost upon us! Wohoo!

Unfortunately, I won't be continuing this story, but who knows? Maybe I'll be back for **Stranger Things 4** if I have any fun ideas?

In the meantime, I just started work on a new story called **Nova**, which takes place in the Marvel Universe, and if your a fan of Stranger Things, I think you'd really enjoy it, so please consider checking it out!

Thanks!

George